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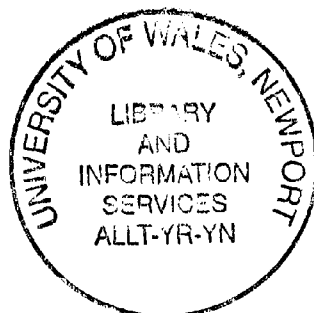
Title: The principles of Talent Management; an investigation into the validity of a Career Development strategy as a tool to ensure the retention of key knowledge workers within International Rectifier Automotive Ltd.

Date: 2005 - 2006

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this dissertation was to research and evaluate the theories of Talent Management, and Career Development in order to provide context to an investigation of the current Career Development strategy in place at International Rectifier EMS Ltd (IRWA). The investigation at IRWA was aimed specifically at identifying the employee perceptions of current career development provision, and to identify particular areas for improvement in the approach taken with IRWA knowledge workers; the Engineering staff.

The main findings of the research were positive, although identifying a need for a more structured approach to career development. A need for a conscious commitment from the management team to embrace the principles of career development for the greater good of the company, rather than viewing the development of staff as a risk that would lead to increased turnover and a loss of 'investment'.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief overview of International Rectifier Automotive Ltd (IR) and the reasons behind this dissertation topic. It explains the aims and objectives, terms of reference for the research and the reason for selecting the topic.

Introduction to International Rectifier Automotive (IRWA) and its business environment

International Rectifier Automotive (IRWA) is a relatively new company that has been operational for just six years and is based on a green-field site at the edge of Swansea City. It is one of the newer business units now established within the parent US owned International Rectifier Corporation (I.R).

Mr Eric Lidow, a Lithuanian by birth, who arrived in the USA during the Second World War, founded International Rectifier Corporation in 1947. Mr Lidow was part of the original team of scientists and Engineers who invented the first transistor that led to the electronic revolution and miniaturisation of many devices such as radios, computers, calculators etc. The company is now one of the Semiconductor Market Leaders, it has one of the highest R&D spends of any semiconductor company and holds many patents to devices and is thus one of the most cash rich Semiconductor companies in the world. The Corporation's current CEO is Alexander Lidow PhD, the son of the founder.

The site in Swansea was developed to be the single source of manufacture for I.R's new Electronic Motion Systems Group, whose core business focuses mainly on power management devices and complete power control solutions for the world wide automotive market. The group is now more commonly referred to as IR Automotive (IRWA); the unit uses leading edge technology and processes that are almost unique to manufacture state of the art energy saving power control devices. These products use IR's wealth of knowledge and experience in the electronic component (discrete device) arena, to ensure designs are IR patented; this prevents any would be competitor challenging the IR overall market share. As an example of IR's market dominance there are Worldwide currently eight prototype electronic power steering applications in existence and IR is the power technology behind five of them.

IRWA – The Strategic Challenge facing the Swansea Site

The Swansea site has been operational for seven years, however it has yet to make any profit. The shareholders are putting pressure on the CEO to achieve certain target gross margin profits in all business areas. The Automotive industry has a completely difference pricing structure and business environment to that of IR's traditional discrete component manufacture, and therefore to achieve a target of 50% gross margin is almost unthinkable. The target was reduced to 35% gross margin by IR Corporation to try to accommodate the difference in industry sector, however even this is a tall ask for most automotive manufacturers.

This fiscal year 2006 it is predicted by IR that for the first time at the end of quarter four in July, the Swansea site will announce it's first ever profit for the Corporation. This will be a tremendous achievement after seven long years of developing processes, improving quality standards, maximising equipment 'up-time', and training some 240 Production Operators. (I.R. EMS Ltd 2005)

There are three new high volume products being launched in 2006/2007, which seemingly secures the site's volume production up to at least 2009.

However, one of the key aspects of ensuring long-term sustainability in such a high-tech organisation will be the retention and development of key knowledge workers, the recruitment and training of future generations of employees that will be required to maintain the pipeline of skills and expertise required to manufacture quality products.

The problem is only now beginning to manifest itself, after six years of hard work and investment in training, the company is now seeing the 'talented' individuals who started in junior positions developing and blossoming into leaders and specialists within their fields of expertise. These employees have four or five very valuable years of experience and knowledge of the Company; it's products and the evolution of those products. However, as IR moves forward, how will it maintain the development and motivation of these key knowledge workers? How will the Company ensure it continues to develop new talent to grow into our future departmental heads and

specialist Engineers? How will IR retain those key workers in whom they have invested in so heavily in order to maintain a successful business?

IR's CEO has taken the decision to employ a Director of Global Talent Management to look at the various challenges faced by IR to taking the company forward. This illustrates the Company recognises the potential benefits of managing its talent effectively. However, Talent Management as a whole is a very large subject area within Human Resources activity, so a year on from the initial recruitment, no tangible outputs have been seen at the Swansea site. This dissertation aims to look at the more specific issue of Career Development within the Organisation, as a business tool to aid retention, and in particular how does it link into the overall corporation's Talent Management initiative.

International Rectifier's Swansea site does not have any tangible HR Strategies, no Resourcing, Development or Retention Strategies. Yet Woodhouse and Thorne (2003) state that these are essential in order to implement Talent Management processes, as any new initiative needs to align with the overall business strategy. This research may provide a starting point at which to develop a Development and Retention Strategy.

The specific issue at IRWA, Swansea on which this research focuses, is the lack of any clear career development strategy or structure for IR Employees. There is a graded framework and clear career path for the manual semi-skilled posts such as Machine Operator, yet ironically the more irreplaceable talent of skilled and professional workers have no clear path for progression. This issue surfaced as a problem in two recent Employee Satisfaction Surveys conducted by the Human Resources Department, and an external survey body.

In the internal satisfaction survey conducted in 2003, it emerged that employees felt particularly strongly about the provision of career development within the organisation. Questions were asked such as 'IR does a good job of providing opportunities for career growth/development' to which the majority responses fell in the 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' columns. The same occurred when the employees were asked to respond to 'I understand what I need to do to prepare for the next level in my career' and 'IR does a good job of promoting the most competent people'.

The 2004 Global Satisfaction Survey conducted by an external survey provider; Tri-Ad, showed that the Swansea site scored poorly overall when compared to all the other IR worldwide sites. However it can also be seen that Career Development and Training surfaced as one of the key areas of concern, with comparably low results in other areas linked to career development and talent management. Such areas as Employee Involvement and Recognition showed poor response by employees to questions such as 'People in this organisation are empowered to develop and implement new ideas', and 'I understand the measures used to evaluate my job performance'. So the issue was identified and suggested as an area for further investigation.

From this previous background research, one possible management tool solution would be to develop a career development programme using principles of talent management theory that would hopefully aim to address some of the issues of retaining and developing the key knowledge workers. The key knowledge workers in manufacturing organisations are typically the engineers and technicians who have an immediate and tangible impact on the quality of the products. It is traditionally the case that in order to 'develop' and 'progress' within an organisation these technical individuals must become team leaders, supervisors or departmental managers. However in contrast, it is often found to be the case that those who are extremely talented engineers are not always so 'talented' as managers. The individuals themselves often miss the 'hands on' aspect of the job, and can feel pressured into management for fear of stagnating as Engineers. Key individuals can then sometimes experience stress and dissatisfaction that can then cause them to seek new challenges elsewhere, possibly in other organisations.

Other employees with less service with IR want to develop their technical careers and find the lack of a clear development path frustrating, many employees want to know what they would need to learn or experience in order to progress to 'the next level' of their career, and gain more seniority within the organisation.

Purpose and Aims

The overall aim of the study is to: Investigate the concept of Talent Management and Evaluate the requirement for designing a career development strategy that meets the needs of both the Engineering knowledge workers and IR Automotive as a company.

Once complete it is hoped the research will provide International Rectifier with a suitable business case for devising a career development strategy that can be implemented at the assembly plant in Swansea. This strategy will lead the company to a change in culture towards a more focused and pro-active way of thinking, perhaps incorporating a more formalised method of succession planning, and the ultimately the use of personal development plans for all employees.

Objectives

1. Research the various theories and philosophies behind the concept of talent management.
2. Evaluate the employee perception of the current approach to career development at IR Automotive.
3. To test whether the idea that – ‘IR does not currently support the career development of its Engineers, and this lack of a career development strategy concerns and frustrates its employees’ is valid by means of phenomenological research.
4. Determine a preferred format for career development programme that would be relevant to the employees and add value to the business.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for this research dissertation were agreed with Rolf Dahlmanns, the Managing Director of International Rectifier EMS Ltd and sets out to explore the following areas: -

- To identify the strategic challenges facing International Rectifier due to the current lack of a clear career development strategy for its key knowledge workers.
- To determine how the gap between the current situation of no structure, can be bridged to provide a fully functional career development strategy that could bolt on to the existing performance appraisal and feed into the site-training plan.
- Any further recommendations that can be made to help the company achieve its long-term goals and sustainability.



Literature Review

Introduction

International Rectifier Swansea employees 360 employees and has a site management structure that consists of a Managing Director and five functional heads of department, these include a Financial Controller, Materials Manager, Quality Manager, Operations Manager, Engineering Manager & a Human Resources Manager. The site reports to a corporate head office in California. The site is now seven years old and has reached a level of maturity that lends itself to a more strategic forward thinking approach to people management.

When research began for this dissertation back in 2004, the particular concept of 'Talent Management' was not something that seemed well publicised; it appeared to be more of an emerging area of Human Resources, just beginning to be discussed in the wider press and by the CIPD. As time has moved on it has become increasingly noticeable that the frequency of articles appearing in the CIPD's People Management magazine, or Personnel Today has increased as have the recruitment advertisements for vacancies such as 'Talent Managers', 'Heads of Talent Acquisition' & 'Talent Management Associates'. Academically speaking the majority of research in the 10-15 years prior to the commencement of this dissertation appeared to focus more on the employment relationship, and the idea of a psychological contract between employee and employer. Talent Management seems to be a collective term and approach for the use of many smaller components of a traditional employment relationship, such as recruitment, development, employee relations and retention activities, with perhaps more of a 'action-orientated' activity (Clake & Wikler, 2006) The concept appears to promote the idea of employers needing to 'sell' their companies and the opportunity within them much more like a product, in order to succeed today's more competitive employment market.

The research was conducted initially by using an infotrack search, and a general Internet search, that included the CIPD website. The IR Corporate Global Talent Manager was also consulted and asked for any recommended texts for research. As mentioned previously the CIPD itself has produced more relevant studies and reports in the last two years that have helped the research for this dissertation to evolve, such as a

their change agenda report 'Reflections on Talent Management' (2006) and a section in the eighth annual CIPD learning and development survey (2006). There is even now a designated section of the CIPD website for Recruitment & Talent Management (www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/recruitment)

What is Talent Management?

Woodhouse & Thorne (2003) refer to Talent Management as “the management of high potential”, Thorne (2003) in her book *Managing the Mavericks* looks more closely at “managing those people who think differently, innovative and creative people, who in some organisations are hidden and held back because they are different from the norm”. However, Michael Williams (2000) chose to formalise a definition by “distilling previous research, observations and anecdotal evidence”, stating that talented people do one or other of the following:

- Regularly demonstrate exceptional ability – and achievement – either over a range of activities and situations, or within a specialised and narrow field of expertise.
- Consistently indicate high competence in areas of activity that strongly suggest transferable, comparable ability in situations where they have yet to be tested and proved to be highly effective, i.e. potential.

The consulting group McKinsey & Co. were the first to publish formalised research into the 'idea' of talent management in 1997, coining the phrase 'The War for Talent'. The formalisation of this old problem was brought about by the global growth and technological advances made in the 90's. Talent Management is driven by the pressures of the external and internal environment of an organisation trying to ensure successful performance and competitive advantage.

Talent Management is seen as a way in which an organisations' HR department can influence at top level, the success and sustainability of an organisation. The key to success is often thought to be how well a HR department and its management can

influence the rest of the organisation. Talent Management should incorporate all individuals within an organisation, and is often mistakenly interpreted as only focusing on future leaders or managers, the top stream. Woodhouse & Thorne (2003) remind us that “no organisation should focus all of its attention on only developing part of its human capital”. They state the important aspect is to recognise the differing needs of individuals within the organisation’s community. This was supported by the findings of the CIPD Learning and Development report (2006).

In the McKinsey & Co. study, (1997) five imperatives were identified for companies to act on to ensure they would “win the war for managerial talent and make talent a competitive advantage”. The five imperatives are:

- Creating a winning EVP (employee value proposition) that will make your company uniquely attractive to talent
- Building a long-term recruiting strategy
- Using job experiences, coaching and mentoring to cultivate potential in managers
- Strengthening your talent pool by investing in A players, developing B players, and acting on C players.
- Central to this approach is a pervasive talent mindset – a deep conviction shared by leaders throughout the company that competitive advantage comes from having better talent at all levels.

Noel Tichy (2002) applies the principles of talent management to Leadership by stating that one of a leader's priority tasks is to develop other leaders. A continuous process of feedback, teaching and coaching that is aimed at creating positive intellectual and emotional energy and commitment in others. Williams, (2000) argues that there are four imperatives similar to those identified by the McKinsey study. All of which centre around of the concept of building a winning environment, making talent management a critical priority, creating the means to select outstanding talent and finally engaging and developing the talent retention.

These introductory elements of theory explain what the overall concept of Talent Management is, and it identifies elements relative to this piece of research such as the

link to development of employees to aid retention. They also raise the idea of various layers of talented employees within an organisation that all need investment to ensure retention and a pool of talent to ensure efficient succession planning.

Phil Smith (2003), from the Cranfield Consultancy, proposes perhaps a more modern view of how Talent Management works in today's employment world. He raises the concept of three different models of Talent Management depending on the business environment of the time. The first model he calls the 'courtship model' the classical approach where the 'War for Talent' idea fits, if the country is in prosperity then the key areas are the attraction and retention of the brightest and best people from the available pool.

However, in times of austerity he talks of an Aladdin's Cave model, where shrinkage and stagnation are the issues, and an organisation must look within the resources it already has 'do more with less'. Smith (2003) refers to an additional front in the War for Talent, a war for hearts, minds and hidden potential of people who live through difficult times. The title Aladdin's Cave comes from the need to find hidden treasure and releasing bottled-up Genies, the challenges of engaging, developing, managing and rewarding people who are already within the organisation's family.

The Third and final model Smith suggests is the third front in the War for Talent, as business moves more towards sub-contracting of non-core activities to third party suppliers and contractors. An interdependency between organisations has evolved; this results in a lack of loyalty or respect of each other's employees. He calls this the partnership model, as this is what is required to find innovative ways of managing other people's talent to your standards.

At IRWA the company appears to resemble the 'Aladdin's Cave' model, as the company is aiming to manufacture at high volume in a country where many manufacturers are leaving to move their business to cheaper labour markets in the succession states of the EU and Eastern Block. IRWA has the leading edge, higher level technology on it's side, but still needs to 'do more with less' to remain a competitive and viable manufacturing facility.

Smith (2003) also cautions us that it may be dangerous to build a talent management strategy geared solely around your current 'best bunch' of staff, as this can encourage a club like atmosphere in which questioning and change can become threatening. He states his definition of Talent would be to define it in terms of the organisation's needs for capability and contribution outside of the normal performance range. Then the various tasks, jobs and people should be managed to make it possible for the goals to be changed and targets to be exceeded.

Why Should an Organisation Manage its Talent?

Woodhouse & Thorne (2003) argue that there are three areas of change that explain why Talent Management has become an issue for many organisations in the new millennium. The first area they identify is Marketplace factors;

- Lower growth opportunities and strong competition, organisations rethink strategies and focus on capability requirements.
- Shorter product lifecycles, means the need for constant and rapid innovation, this results in a need for a certain type of individual employee.
- Organisations now focus on cost reduction in order to compete effectively, but organisations also need to provide better products and services to customers.
- An ever-increasing number of companies are relocating production and supply chain activities to countries in the Far East that offer low-cost manufacturing.
- The idea that global recession has led to a 'survival of the fittest' environment.

IRWA's situation in this research would reinforce the first point within marketplace factors. However, the second point of shorter product lifecycles would only apply to certain business sectors. In the automotive industry products are 'designed in' to car models for a minimum time of 4 years, this can often grow with variants on the initial design to a 10-year product life span. Thus a more relevant issue for International Rectifier would be to recruit and retain specialised, experienced and skilled individuals to work within the automotive electronics sector, rather than individuals that can constantly innovate to supply new leading edge products.

IRWA does conform to the other remaining points above, it is constantly under pressure to reduce costs and improve performance for the customer. In the automotive sector in order to win a contract in the first instance a year-by-year 'cost down' of the product must be included. A failure to provide this cost reduction can result in a breach of contract. This has led to a global decision by the IR Corporation to relocate where appropriate its supply chain activity. This is now focusing on suppliers in the Far East, as well as those in the previously mentioned succession states of the EU, such as Turkey, a country previously thought of as under-developed.

Talent Management & Motivation

Understanding what motivates people is essential in undertaking any Talent Management research. In Talent Management employee motivation is key and forms the core of many Human Resource activities, the basis of which is often referred to as the much-discussed psychological contract between employer and employee. This idea of a psychological contract was first written by Schein (1998), it used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs from the 1940's, which is argued is based on various assumptions. Mayo (1995) summarised those assumptions as: -

- That employees are treated fairly and honestly, and that information regarding changes to work will be provided, so as to meet the need for equity and justice.
- Employees can expect to have some degree of security about the job they do in return for their loyalty to an employer; this fulfils the need for security and relative certainty.
- Finally that an employee can expect an employer to recognise and value their past and future contribution, so as to satisfy their need for fulfilment, satisfaction and progression.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2003) advocates the use of the 'Psychological Contract' and it is now considered a theory with principles that are now widely used in the workplace by human resource professionals. Whilst also underpinning the teachings of the CIPD in their professional qualifications. The relevance to this study; is that the principles within the psychological contract form the basis for many aspects of Talent Management. Any activity of an employer's business

or behaviour that would be deemed to break the psychological contract, ultimately results in increased turnover of staff, possible loss of valuable skills (talent) and the employees who do not move become suspicious and lacking in motivation to develop further within the organisation.

The psychological contract is built on three principles fairness, trust and the delivery of the deal made between an organisation and its employees. In 2002, the CIPD report, *Pressure at Work and the Psychological Contract* (Guest & Conway) suggested that the traditional idea of the psychological contract was still relevant, they stated the most people expect to stay with their employer for the next five years and be promoted during that time.

The CIPD more recently commissioned a research report by Guest, D and Conway, N (2004) into Employee Well being and the psychological contract. This report discusses the changes in the way organisations now deal with the psychological contract. The report states that organisations have learnt and are more successful in delivering on their promises than they were when the concept of the contract first came about. However, the areas of the contract that employees still feel they have issues, is in the areas of trust and fairness. It is in these areas that they argue employees feel the levels of trust and fairness are actually decreasing, as employers can no longer offer a job for life or guaranteed security. The CIPD (2006) argues that the psychological contract is taken more seriously nowadays due to the changes in the workplace, such as more part-time workers, more outsourcing of jobs and organisations de-layering and becoming leaner. These changes mean that employees are seen increasingly as business drivers. The fact-sheet suggests that organisations that wish to succeed need to get the most from their employee resource.

One aspect of the psychological contract is the idea that a 'good employer' provides a career for an individual. The report examines the change in expectations that employees now have with regard to their careers. Guest and Conway (2004) argue that people have career preferences. The survey conducted as part of Guest and Conway's research identified three distinct groups of employees in terms of their attitudes towards their career. The three types of attitude identified are:

1. Traditional – working longer hours than most, displaying high commitment and motivation. These people want long-term tenure in one organisation and upward mobility – they also tended to be younger workers.
2. Disengaged – work is not a central life interest; they don't want any emotional ties to the organisation. These employees tended to be older, long tenure, low-income workers who had low motivation and a reluctance to do any extra.
3. Independent – low commitment and satisfaction. These employees want career success, but on their own terms and without being tied to any one organisation. They tended to be graduates on high incomes and with short tenure. They show lower organisation commitment, lower satisfaction, a poorer psychological contract and a higher intention to quit.

IRWA appears to have a selection of workers who would seem to fit both the traditional and disengaged types of attitude. The company does not have many recent graduates so type three does not appear to be relevant in the IRWA setting.

Goleman (1999) who studied a group of men and women at the end of their careers, states the importance of a balance between employee's needs to manage their own careers and yet to also commit to shared goals at work. His research suggests that the more support employees are given by their employer; the more loyalty, trust and attachment they will show. In his book 'working with emotional intelligence, he argued that the ultimate sources of satisfaction for employees reflecting at the end of their careers were very different from the traditional view of incentives. Instead the responses were much more on the 'soft' side of Human Resources, such as Creative Challenges, Stimulating work and the chance to keep learning. Goleman concludes, "to reach the top rung, people must love what they do and find pleasure in doing it".

Knowledge Workers such as Engineers can provide a different set of challenges for an organisation. Kay Thorne (2003) in 'Managing the Mavericks' surveyed a group of people identified as innovators and asked them 'if they could change one aspect of the organisation that would encourage the nurturing of talent what would they recommend?' The responses were interesting. I have summarised a few key responses that are relevant to this study below: -

- Trust People
- Flexibility - understanding that following 'the way we do things here' is a recipe for stagnation.
- Let people work when and where they think they can offer the greatest potential. So much more can be achieved when they are away from the office, and the confines of it's thinking, time away can open peoples minds to new areas.
- Regular honest feedback to encourage and reinforce positive risk taking.
- Not overloading people with routine administrative work. Allow time to dream.

One very interesting point posed by Woodhouse & Thorne, (2003) is the idea that in large organisations the problem is tracking people. They suggest that many people feel their talent goes unnoticed, this is reinforced by the idea that there is a very real concern that middle management hides and diffuses the impact of real talent. This can then frustrate senior management, who long for more initiative and potential within the organisation, and those who are embryonic talents, who feel held back because people are afraid of their more radical ideas that differ from the norm.

Careers and Career Management

In a CIPD Report by Dr Wendy Hirsh on Career Management (2002), suggests that for many employers a Career Development structure is seen as a 'nice to have' rather than a necessity. She investigated a number of issues she deemed to be key; one of which is what is career management? The CIPD's guide to career management (1998) spoke of a need for balance from the HR professionals in terms of what the employer requires from career development and the employees needs, 'each individual can bring different perspectives to career management and success depends on resolving these differences'. Traditionally HR looks at career management/development from the issues of the company, with strategic objectives such as retention of key skills/staff, growing future senior management or supporting changes within the organisation.

Zella King (2004) in the CIPD, Guide to Career Management defines 'career' as, the sequence of employment-related positions, roles, activities and experiences encountered by a person. However, in her report she states that in reality many people think of careers as an 'upward progression of jobs, increasing in pay, status and

responsibility' and because of this commonly held perception of careers many think this term only applies to those in positions of Senior or Middle management.

King goes on to argue that what individuals want from their careers depends on where they are in their personal and working lives. She argues that people's career priorities are dependant on their background, age, family situation, financial commitments, lifestyle choices and future life plans.

In the 1998 guide it was concluded that there is much less emphasis on the priorities of the majority of the employees; which are suggested as meeting the future skills needs of the organisation, the movement of staff between jobs, and supporting the understanding between the organisations wants and the employees needs. This final aspect is argued as being crucial when linking Career Development/Management back to the Talent Management strategy of the organisation. Arnold, (1997) has suggested that there is a need to recognise the shifting nature of careers and the need to encourage lateral moves and help employees navigate less clear career paths. These less than clear paths can include short-term and long-term roles, secondments and project-type roles.

The 2003, CIPD Managing Employee Careers survey stated that only a quarter of organisations that responded have a formal strategy for career management. Those that do, see it as a way of responding to the needs of the business and is normally linked into the overall HR strategy of the organisation. Yet a year later in King (2004) reports the issue of balancing the company's requirements and the individual's needs are still seen as a key priority to making Career Management work as a concept. King suggests Career Management should aim to find 'an optimal, rather than a perfect, fit between the organisation's and the individual's perspective.

King and the CIPD propose four underlying principles of effective career management:

- Consistency – messages from line managers and HR should be coherent and consistent as the responsibility of career management is shared between the two.
- Proactivity – effective career management anticipates the future direction of an organisation, reflecting the wider corporate strategy and objectives. Providing flexibility and agility for the future.

- Collaboration – effective career management is based on partnership between the employer and the employee. Employers should aim to work with employees at all levels of the organisation to find mutually satisfactory solutions.
- Dynamism – Career management requires flexibility and compromise over time, as changing circumstances mean that each party involved wants and expects different things from the employment relationship.

The CIPD Managing Employee Careers Survey (2003) derived five core components of career management. These are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

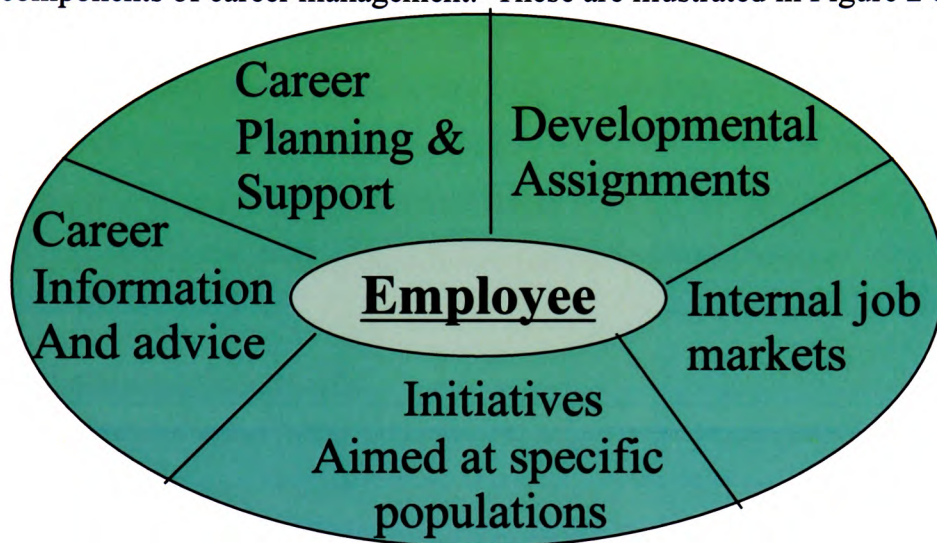


Fig:1

1. Career Planning and Support

The survey suggested some typical activities that enable an organisation to assist in an individual's career planning process. Personal Development plans and the objectives set within are seen as a key tool, as they enable the individual to take responsibility for their development. The Performance Appraisal or Review with the manager or supervisor is also key as without the support and feedback of the line manager the development plan alone will not enable success. King's 2004 report also suggests the importance of informal support from the HR or Training function, as well as development programmes that include work or career experience.

The key considerations identified by King in this report for this component are that individuals should be realistic in formulating their development plans, King argues that it is not always possible to think of developing by progressing upwards, developing can also mean employees facing new challenges in their current role or through job

transfers or secondments. King also stresses that development does not always have to be via training courses, on the job coaching from a colleague or manager can also be as effective.

2. Career Information, advice and counselling

Typical activities in this section are career counselling, information and advice from a learning centre, career workshops, career coaching and information provided on intranets etc. King also identifies this component as a way of encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own development. This can be a relatively simple way of supporting career management as coaching, information and advice can often be provided internally by managers or as a corporate resource on intranets etc. Using Internal staff is a quicker, cheaper and more accessible option, however it must be remembered that internal staff as coaches can limit the honesty of employees who may hold back for fear of harming their future internal company career.

3. Development Assignments

Typical activities listed for this component are external secondments, career break schemes, internal secondments, project assignments and work shadowing, as well as International assignments. King states that this component is relevant to companies that have a limited vertical hierarchy and thus upward progression is not possible for many employees. This provides the alternative of cross-functional or lateral moves. The main concern with this component is it changes employees to alter their mindset of career progression being an upward movement.

4. Internal Job Markets and job posting systems

Activities relevant here are the internal job market, employees being able to apply for roles internally, posting those vacancies online or on vacancy boards, and using web based systems for receiving cv's, filtering applicants etc. These activities again are proposed as ways of encouraging employees to manage their own career plans in the internal organisation, by determining the skills they require to develop.

5. Initiatives aimed at specific populations

Here King and the CIPD (2004) recommend activities such as Succession Planning, high potential development schemes, graduate entry, assessment/development centres

and career moves managed by the organisation. This component as the names suggests targets specific skill sets that are peculiar to the organisation, or where the skills are difficult to replace. It therefore makes sense for the employer to plan and develop the careers of these certain employees carefully to avoid loss. Succession planning is of course the way to ensure that the organisation has a constant 'pool' of talent from which it can fill the vacancies of the future. King identifies the need for organisations to align their succession plans with the long-term career plans of the individuals concerned, to avoid wasting investment.

These five core components would seem to support the findings of those researchers who have previously argued that Talent Management is not a simple area to explore, that the management of talent can be drilled down into many smaller areas, each in turn a significant as the other. Each part contributes to the all-important overall concept of the psychological contract between employer and employee. The components suggested by King (2004) and the CIPD seemingly can be applied to different types of workers including the all important knowledge workers as defined by the likes of Woodhouse and Thorne (2003) at the start of this review.

Swart & Kinnie (2004) found that managing Professional Knowledge workers can pose several dilemmas for employers. From their research they propose three key dilemmas;

- Retention and employability – these types of individuals want employability, for knowledge workers this means having up to date skills that make them desirable to employers. However, many bosses want to retain their talent and offer them development and career opportunities that tie them to their organisation. Employers are often wary of offering too much so as not to make the employees attractive to competitors.
- Skills –are the second dilemma suggested by Swart & Kinnie, employers want to develop organisation specific skills, whilst the employee wishes to develop skills that are more transferable.
- Value Appropriation is the third and final dilemma - this is when organisations want to take their employees knowledge and skills and put them into products

and services to sell for a profit. In contrast the employees want to hang onto as much of their value as possible to ensure they can trade this at the highest rate.

IRWA's reluctance to commit to career development seems to show some commonality between those concepts raised by Swart & Kinnie (2004) in their 5 dilemmas. IRWA does show signs in the past of training very organisational specific skills for equipment that is perhaps only used in IR processes. IR as a corporation can be a little concerned about investing in employees and making them particularly marketable to competitors, this is something that perhaps stems from the corporation's business of Semiconductors being a particularly competitive one, especially in the California area of the head quarters, this cultural nervousness of losing valuable talent appears to filter through the business.

King's five components to raise interesting points of how a company can contribute to career management, some of which may be particularly suitable to the IRWA situation.

NICEC/CRAC Research

The National Institute for Career Education & Counselling (NICEC) supported by the Careers Research Advisor Centre (CRAC) produced a report by Hirsch et al. (2001) that focuses on the effectiveness of career discussions at work. This is of particular relevance to this dissertation topic and argues that the majority of employees who have experience of career discussions at work view them positively. The research showed that 55% of the positive career discussions took place with managers in the organisation, however only a fifth were actually with the individuals line manager, and the majority of those were outside of a formal appraisal process.

The research also suggested that HR has a prominent part to play in effective career discussions as 11% of positive discussions were with HR, as well as 8% at career or training events. 14% of positive discussions were with mentors and coaches and a further 12% with external advisers/psychologists. All these areas would normally have some link to the Human Resources function.

The NICEC research also argues that today over half of career discussions are not part of any 'formal HR process', with only 7% of discussions taking place as part of an

performance appraisal, yet the research states that although these discussions aren't part of any formal process, 80% of the discussions are still arranged by appointment. An interesting finding from the NICEC research is that 83% of the discussions took place with someone older than the 'receiver', with 64% taking place with someone of the same gender.

The NICEC research will provide a framework for the initial area of research for this dissertation. The research will aim to test the relevance of the findings from the NICEC to IRWA such as; where discussions take place and by whom, as well as expected qualities of givers for a successful career discussion. This will provide a background upon which to compare and contrast the views of the IR sample, before moving the research on to look at the knowledge workers views more closely. This NICEC research framework will enable the second and fourth objectives of this dissertation to be achieved.

In summary there seems to be no one single method for effectively managing talent, it would appear that each organisation has differing needs and talent management issues. Each organisation it appears needs to set its own specific talent management strategy linked to the organisations values and 'pipeline' requirements. IRWA needs to identify clearly the capabilities it requires in order to meet its business targets. Then it is possible to develop a strategy that will enable the business to achieve its capability requirements.

Career development is particularly pertinent to IRWA as it relies heavily on 'knowledge workers' being a high tech employer, therefore developing the existing talent with the specific knowledge and expertise IR requires is essential in order to achieve the companies capability requirements for sustainability. This dissertation will aim to identify the specific issues at IRWA as it is currently, and identify the need to devise and implement a formal approach to Talent Management and in particular Career Development.

Methodology

This section provides details about the approach used in the research, the justification for such an approach and a brief outline of the arrangements for undertaking the review.

A key issue in the choice of a research method has to be as Kirk and Miller (1986) point out, the Question of Validity, Reliability and Generalisability. Easterby-Smith (1993) devised a framework showing the differences between the traditional positivist view or quantitative methodology and the more modern approach of phenomenological or qualitative method. Phenomenological research uses concept and not statistics as a means of understanding a problem.

Easterby Smith (1993) defined the strengths and weaknesses of Qualitative and Quantitative research methods as: -

Quantitative – Strengths are that it can cover a wide range of situations, its fast and economical. It's statistically sound.

Weaknesses are it is inflexible, artificial. It's not an effective technique to understand a process. It's not helpful in theory generation and it does not aid future policy making.

Qualitative – Strengths are it's a flexible approach. It can enable the understanding of people meanings. Adjustable to new measures and can contribute to new theories.

Weaknesses – Large amount of research required. Difficult to carry out and can have low credibility.

In order to effectively study the various approaches to the career development of Knowledge Workers (Engineering staff in I.R's case), it is my aim to conduct my research using a qualitative phenomenological approach, using criterion sampling to conduct two stages of data gathering.

Firstly in order to understand the view of the IR Swansea Management Team, I will utilise part of the CIPD Tool – Career discussions at Work, to canvas the opinions of the Management Team as to the organisations ability to support career development,

the questionnaire used for this is one taken from the NICEC research and is called the Career Capability Checklist. This Tool for business use is designed to look at different aspects of the organisation's career activities. The four areas the tool focuses on are:

1. Strategy & Climate
2. Processes
3. People to talk to
4. Training and Career Support.

This enables the identification of key action areas within the business. The IR Swansea Management Team who will be asked to each complete a questionnaire, are the six key decision making individuals who can support a strategic cultural change of culture in how the business views career development. The management team's opinions can support or contradict the hypotheses of this report, and therefore their responses will give an indication of the degree of relevance this research has to the IRWA business.

Once the opinions of the site management team are gained, the next stage of research would be to test out the hypothesis that IR does not currently have the strategy & capability to support career development, and therefore the lack of a clear development strategy for employees is an area of concern & frustration. The method for gathering data will be to interview Engineering employees who are in research terms the experiential experts in the current working environment within IR.

It is argued that this qualitative phenomenological approach is best suited to this area of study, as there are no set variables into which I am researching. The subject matter fits a method of investigation that can use case study experiences, research surveys and observational trends and applies them to the situation in question at International Rectifier. Denzin & Lincoln, (1998) state that qualitative research implies an emphasis on processes and meanings over measures of quantity, intensity, and frequency. When looking into methods of qualitative research Patton, (1990) suggests that qualitative methodologies generally share three assumptions: a holistic view, an inductive approach, and naturalistic inquiry. For the purposes of this research the description of an inductive approach seems particularly relevant in order to discover common themes and hopefully recommendations will emerge from the data.

At International Rectifier specific observations and comments have been made in employee satisfaction surveys, regarding the lack of a formal strategy for career progression and development. This research aims to move towards discovering any general patterns or themes that will hopefully emerge from the cases under study, and theoretical research already undertaken.

This report will use a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data in order to discover the current ability to manage it's employees careers using a pre-existing tool provided by the CIPD to it's members on line. This tool is a questionnaire that explores the perceptions of respondents to an organisations capability to support principles of career development. This questionnaire will be given to two different samples of employees from the IRWA site, initially the management team will complete the survey, and then to offer a contrasting view a sample of indirect employees will also complete the survey. This 360-degree approach should give a reasonably rounded view of the organisation's capability at the outset of this research. This 'point in time' information will help to take a current temperature check of the organisation, as well as to provide a benchmark on which to measure the result of any future improvements that are made following this research.

The report will then move onto drill the study down to look at a more specific group of employees; those who would be identified as key knowledge workers; the Engineering staff. These employees take a long time to train, have very specific skills and can add a considerable value to the business to enable long-term sustainability in an ever-increasing competitive manufacturing industry.

The type of qualitative research to be used, will mostly centre on ethnographic enquiry, Rudestam & Newton (2001) describe an inductive type of ethnography as the researcher developing a theory out of descriptive and interpretive processes.

The research would consist of an ethnographic interview, with a sample of selected employees from the engineering departments of the professional indirect staff. It is proposed to ask the interviewees a series of sixteen semi-structured questions that will explore and examine their feelings towards International Rectifier as an employer, and canvas their views on how the company manages the development of it's key skill

employees. The researcher will then aim to move the interview on to discuss the Engineer's experiences in other organisations of career development, and explore the relevance of seven thinking frameworks that apply to the way people view and plan their career development. This should provide textual data rather than numerical. Rudestam & Newton (2001) describe a phenomenological study as usually involving, identifying and locating participants who have experienced or are experiencing the phenomenon that is being explored, this therefore seem the most relevant approach to take for this piece of research. This is further reinforced by Bailey (1996) who describes this approach:

‘Phenomenological research uses sampling which is idiographic, focusing on the individual or case study in order to understand the full complexity of an individual's experience....the findings are relevant from the perspective of the user of the findings’.
(P.30)

Bailey's (1996) explanation of the Phenomenological approach I feel is particularly relevant to International Rectifier and this study, as in this case it is the employees individual thoughts and experiences that provides the basis of the research. It enables the interviewer to alter the questions slightly to accommodate points made by the interviewees as and when appropriate, such is the nature of the qualitative interview. The pre-prepared questions will however act as an interview plan.

It is proposed to use the initial prepared questions to initiate further questions that may probe deeper into areas and trigger reflection on experiences. It is essential the interview questions be designed to give the researcher, the best chance of obtaining a useful but balanced response to the topic area under investigation. Questions will aim to be ‘neutral’ not leading, and should be posed in an open conversational style so that the interviewer can probe further, thus giving flexibility; in that the answer to one question may influence the next question asked. It is important however that the questions should not be vague, to begin with the question should be fairly general, this then allows for a more specific question to act as a prompt if the interviewee becomes stuck.

When constructing questions the interview must be careful not to ask value-laden or leading questions, jargon should be avoided wherever possible. Obviously asking closed questions that supply only yes or no answers should be avoided. The other important factor is to make sure that the interviewer only asks one question at a time.

It is with these principles in mind that I have drafted the following sixteen questions. The researcher will require as background information on the interviewees including their name, job title and length of service, this will assist when trying to analyse and categorise the responses.

The questions to be posed in the semi-structured employee interviews are available in appendix 1.

Question 10 is a replication of a question asked by Kay Thorne (2004) in 'Managing the Mavericks', it is believed it would be interesting to look at whether the answers of the employees at IRWA were in anyway similar to the answers that she obtained in her research.

The idea behind questions 11 to 13 is to try and obtain information about the employees' perception of career development, and the different approaches other employers may have used.

Question 14 is an attempt at seeing if any particular styles of thinking frameworks appear more popular than others, if so this will help to add more relevance to developing a proposed programme for IR. The frameworks mentioned in the questionnaire are referred to in the CIPD Tool for Career discussions at work, in which the NICEC found that good 'givers' of career advice also used a particular framework.

In order to remain responsive during the interview, it may be wise to try and pre-empt some of the possible 'further questions' that may need to be asked to probe deeper. An additional method of probing further into the interviewees responses will be when appropriate, by taking their last statement and turning it into a question, and using some generic probes such as 'Was this what you expected, How so/How not? Can you elaborate on this? As an interviewer it is important to allow silences or non-verbal

responses such as nodding, these are also important tools in allowing elaboration of specific points. At the end of the interview the researcher will also ask if 'There is anything you would like to add?'

Sample Selection

The employees, are to be selected randomly ensuring at least two interviewees from each technical discipline department, thus gaining a cross section from the various departmental groups within the engineering staff employees. By selecting interviewees from the engineering function randomly it is hoped to gain a varied selection of employees who have differing lengths of service, and therefore differing employment experiences historically.

Role of the Interviewer

It is important to discuss the role of the interviewer in a qualitative study. The interviewer's role is important and can determine the success of the research overall. The interviewer can influence the research in many ways. The interviewer should be able to make the interviewee feel relaxed and at ease, they should be able to develop trust and mutual respect. It is also important to speak and act in a way that is non-threatening, whilst conveying a feeling of compassionate listening and sympathetic approach towards their expressed feelings and opinions. It also planned to use a technique of 'reflection' in order to check that the interviewer has accurately received what the interviewee is saying; this will also help to demonstrate the listening ability of the interviewer.

The interviews will be recorded by taking written notes. This will be most appropriate for the interviewees as this is a style of interview they are used to and feel comfortable with. In this company it was felt that to tape record the interviews would risk making the employees feel uncomfortable, self conscious and nervous about having the conversation recorded. The transcription of tape-recorded interviews can be time consuming and conversations can sometimes be miss heard or not easily understood. The note taking method proposed can lead to accusations of a non-objective record unless the transcription is given to the interviewee as a means of authenticating the content. It is therefore the researcher's intent once the interview notes are transcribed,

to pass them onto the interviewee for checking as a means of authentication and validation.

Disadvantages of Semi-structured interviews are that they do take more time; this is due to the lack of control due the unpredictable nature of the conversational interview. The technique can also reduce the control the researcher has over the situation. The data collected from this type of interview is also harder to analyse than in traditional structured interviews. The main advantages of Semi-structured interviews is that they allow the facilitation of a rapport and empathy with the participant which it is hoped will allow a more relaxed and open environment. This type of interview also allows for greater flexibility in the sense that the interviewer can probe or follow any comments that may seem relevant so coverage of the topic area can be greater. Interviews that are semi-structured are also believed to produce richer data. This is compared to the disadvantages of structured interviews being that they tend to close off theoretical avenues, they limit what the respondent can actually talk about, and this can result in the interviewer missing what the respondent sees as important. It tends to give more simple answers that although easier to analyse, actually stops the ability to obtain complex answers, inconsistencies etc.

Transcription

There are various issues to consider with the process on transcribing interviews. The transcripts provide a permanent and accessible record of speech data. It must be remembered that transcripts do not provide completely accurate records of any conversation, interview or discussion. The analysis is also readily open to interpretation; this can also give the advantage of empowering the reader.

The person transcribing the interviews often has personal interests that may influence the features of the discourse that are salient to him or her. Some words or phrases may only be understood by the researcher who often has background knowledge of the subject or subject's environment. The transcriber can also 'fill in gaps' thus interpreting what the participants are saying. One way to improve the validity of the transcripts is to let the interviewee read, check and approve of the interpretation of the conversation and interview.

Data Analysis

To analyse the data collected from the two stages of interview, it is proposed to use the technique of framework analysis, Ritchie and Spencer (1994). Framework Analysis was developed for the use of applied policy research. Applied policy research aims to meet specific information needs and provide outcomes or recommendations, often within a short timescale. The benefits of using framework analysis is that it provides systematic and visible stages to the analyses process, this means readers and potential sponsors can be clear about the stages by which the results have been obtained from the data.

Framework analysis has five clear stages;

- Familiarisation
- Identifying a thematic framework
- Indexing – the process of applying a thematic framework to the data using numerical or textual codes to identify specific pieces of data which correspond to differing themes.
- Charting – using headings from the thematic framework to create charts of the data so it can be easily read across the whole dataset. The charts can be created by theme or by respondent.
- Mapping and Interpretation – searching for patterns, associations and explanations to the data, this can be aided by visual displays and plots.

Richie & Spencer (2004) suggest that at this stage the qualitative analyst might be aiming to define concepts, create typologies, find associations within the data, provide explanations or develop strategies. They suggest that the analyst will choose which area will have the greater emphasis dependant on the themes that have emerged from the data and the original research question. This seems to fit with the brief of this dissertation report, in the sense that the aim is to identify any central themes of dissatisfaction amongst employees in regard to the career development strategy of IRWA.

Research Findings

The first method of data gathering used an existing tool provided by the CIPD/NICEC questionnaire to research the Management Teams perception of the company's capability to support career development. This was executed in the form of a capability checklist of 16 questions. The 16 questions were divided into four subject groups:

- 1.Strategy & Climate
2. Processes
3. People to talk to
4. Training in Career support.

Each participant must mark the statement with one of three responses.

Response 1 – Pretty Good

Response 2 – Some Attention Needed

Response 3 – Need to really tackle this

For the purposes of collation, the three response options were coded by identifying a key word; Good, Attention & Tackle respectively. See below for graphical representations of the data.

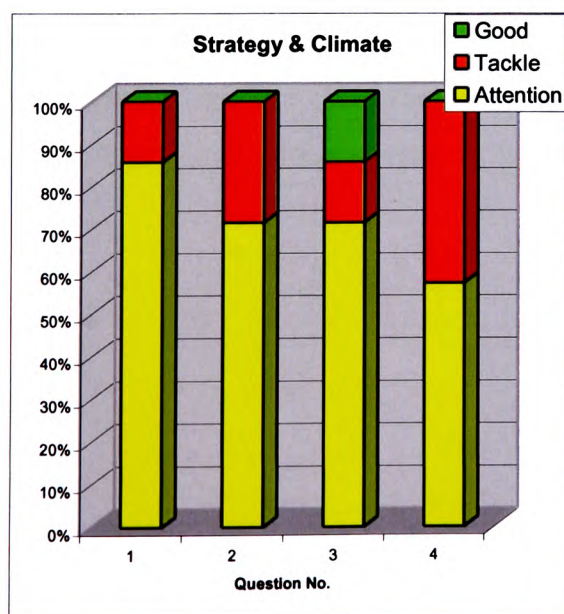


Fig: 2

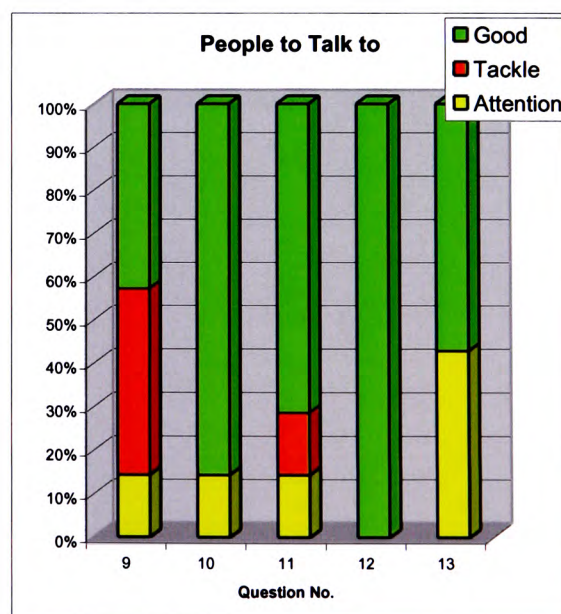


Fig: 4

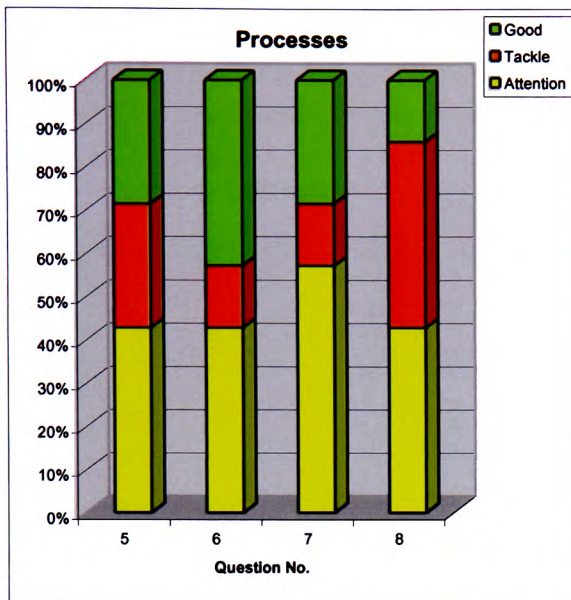


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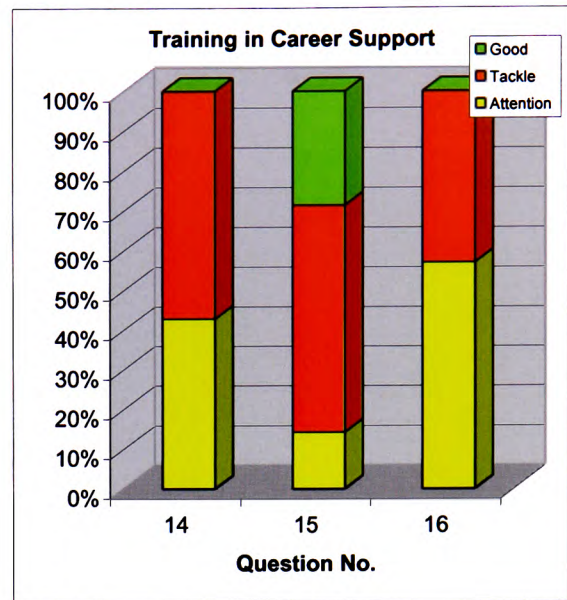


Fig:5

These findings act as an indicator of the Senior Management team's views on the company's capability to handle the development of its employees.

In order to provide a benchmark view of the wider workforces opinion to compare and contrast against the Senior Management teams view, a further sample of twenty more members of the indirect staff working in the professional support areas was taken. This is around 25% of the indirect workforce. The aim of this further research sample was to provide an indicator of the general employee view, not only to compare with the management view but also to act as a background to the further research to be undertaken with the Engineering staff.

The results of the additional sample are as follows: -

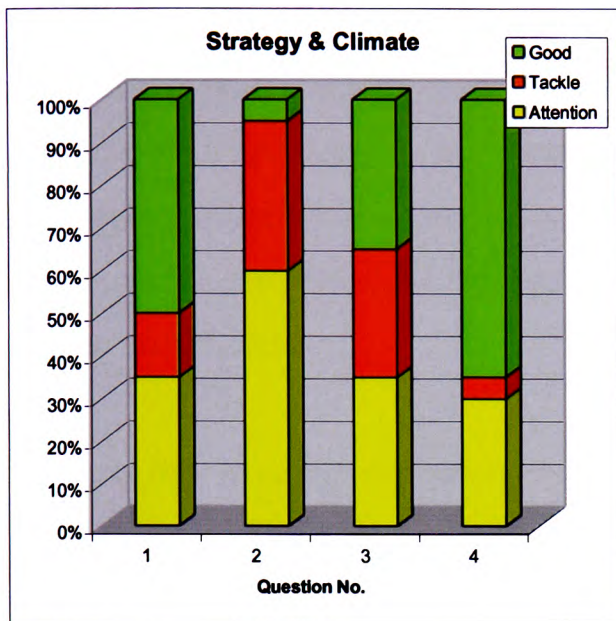


Fig:6

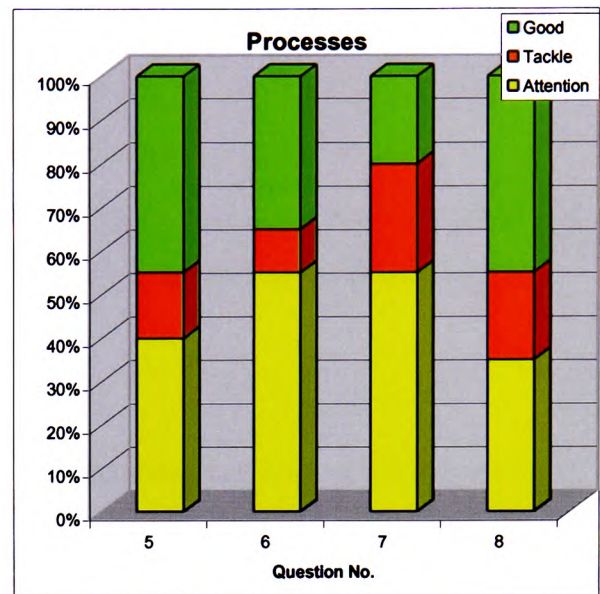


Fig:7

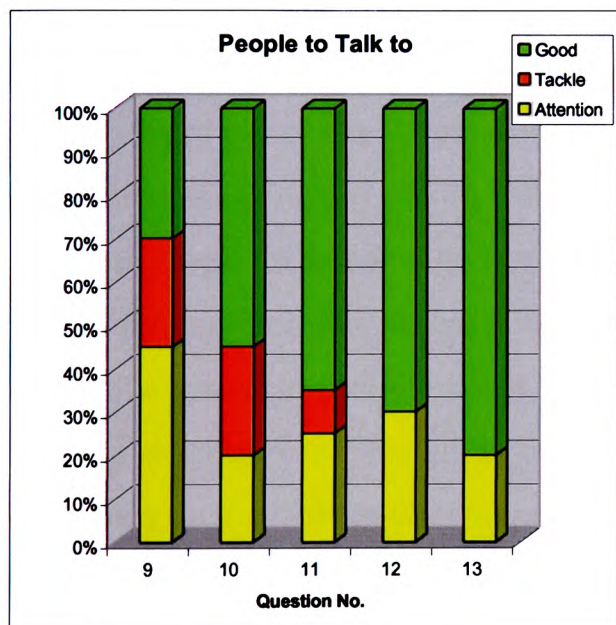


Fig:8

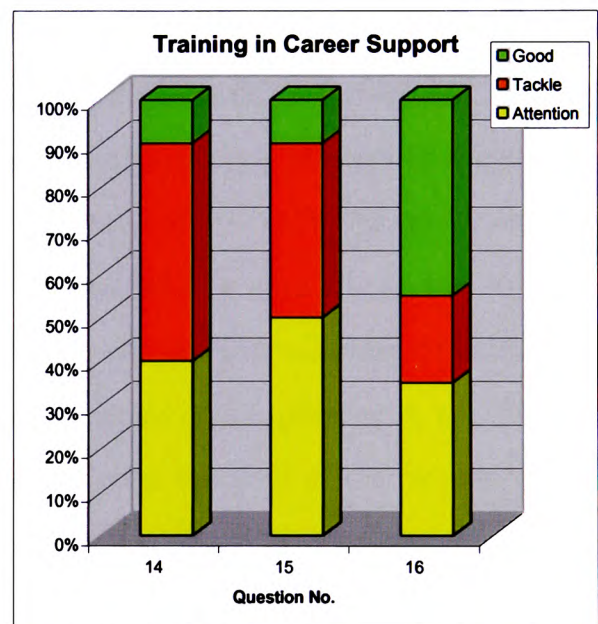


Fig: 9

The results of the employee's questionnaires did provide an interesting insight into their views. They also raised a potential further area of analysis in terms of the differences in perceptions between the employees across functional departments. This difference would potentially suggest some departments have been managed more positively in terms of career development than others. Therefore supporting the theme raised in the management questionnaire responses, that one area for focus and improvement would be to improve the consistency of the organisation's application of its career development strategy and practices.

The checklists gave a 'temperature check' of background data that shows how the two groups of individuals viewed the capability of the organisation in its current state. The more specific aim of this report however, is to look into how the 'knowledge workers' of the organisation are managed in terms of their career development. This would hopefully lead to an answer to the question of whether a more strategic structured approach is necessary in devising a career development framework for use at the Swansea site. Any such framework needs to be relevant to the business and ultimately a process that would add value to the company. With that in mind the third stage of research was undertaken, specifically with the knowledge workers, the Engineers of the business whose role are to take the product from the design house and facilitate the volume manufacture of the parts to meet the customers requirements. Without their key skills and experiences, the site's ability to be competitive would be greatly diminished, as it is the skill of the Engineers that allows such a high level of automation and limited use of manual operators, thus giving the site a technological edge in the increasingly difficult battle with the cheaper labour markets in the Eastern Block and Asia.

Case Study Research – Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to probe deeper into the more specific target group or key informers of the research the 'knowledge workers' within the IR organisation, its Engineers. A case study approach was adopted to enable individual discussion with a sample of ten engineers.

A semi-structured interview was devised that enabled the researcher to ask a series of questions focusing on four main areas of enquiry. The areas of enquiry were devised from the initial research objectives, and provide a means of testing the validity of the

research statement proposed that ‘IR does not currently support the career development of its Engineers, and this lack of a career development strategy concerns and frustrates its employees’.

The results from the interview transcripts were compiled using Framework Analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994), a Thematic Framework was used to enable common themes and emerging issues to be identified, and produced in chart format, as can be seen on page 37 & 38 of this report.

The initial thematic framework was devised as follows. The first stage was to identify Theme Groups (1-4) that sectioned off the information, then actual Themes (1.1, 2.2...) that emerged from the interview transcripts, and finally some examples of sub-themes (1.1.2, 2.1.2.).

The initial Framework devised was as follows: -

1. IR as an employer

1.1 Prior to commencement of employment

1.1.1 As a semiconductor company

1.1.2 As an Employer

1.2 Once an employee

1.2.1 Good conditions

1.2.2 Good Career Progression

1.2.3 Bad, Lack of planning

2. Career Development

2.1 Career goals on commencement

2.1.1 To progress to Engineer status

2.1.2 To progress into Supervisory position

2.1.3 To Increase skills and knowledge

2.2 Career Progression

2.2.1 Skills and Experience has increased

2.2.2 Career Progressed – Promotion

2.2.3 No Progression

2.3 Career Plans

- 2.3.1 Yes and No.
- 2.3.2 No, don't know.
- 2.3.3 Yes I know but it doesn't involve IR.

3. Nurturing Talent

- 3.1 Improve Communications
 - 3.2 Improve Planning
 - 3.3 Develop Career Path/Structure
 - 3.4 More Training
- 4.
- 4.1 never participated in a development review.
 - 4.2 Yes I have as part of appraisal system.
 - 4.2.1 Discussed Career progression
 - 4.2.2 Discussed objectives & skills needed to meet them.
 - 4.2.3 Discussed problems, a mentor approach
 - 4.3 Received Tangible Actions
 - 4.3.1 Objectives/Tasks/Projects
 - 4.3.2 Training/Development

Some areas of the interview were more suited to traditional quantitative graphical analysis and display. Those mainly fell into the final section of the interview concerning, the participants preferred career thinking frameworks; Figure 10, the qualities they would expect from someone giving career advice; Figure 11. The final summary question asking the view on who's has the greater responsibility for career development, the individual or the company also fitted the more traditional graphical depiction of results: Figure 12.

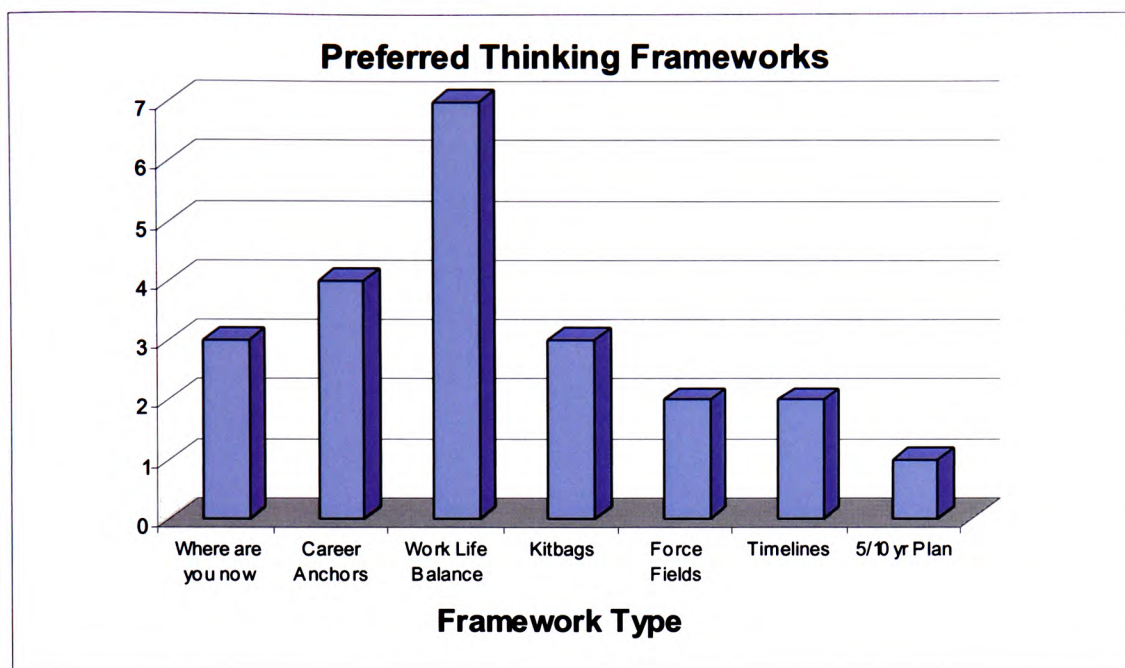
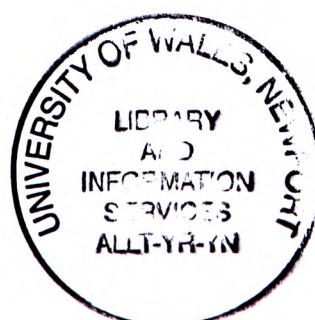


Fig: 10



Fig: 11



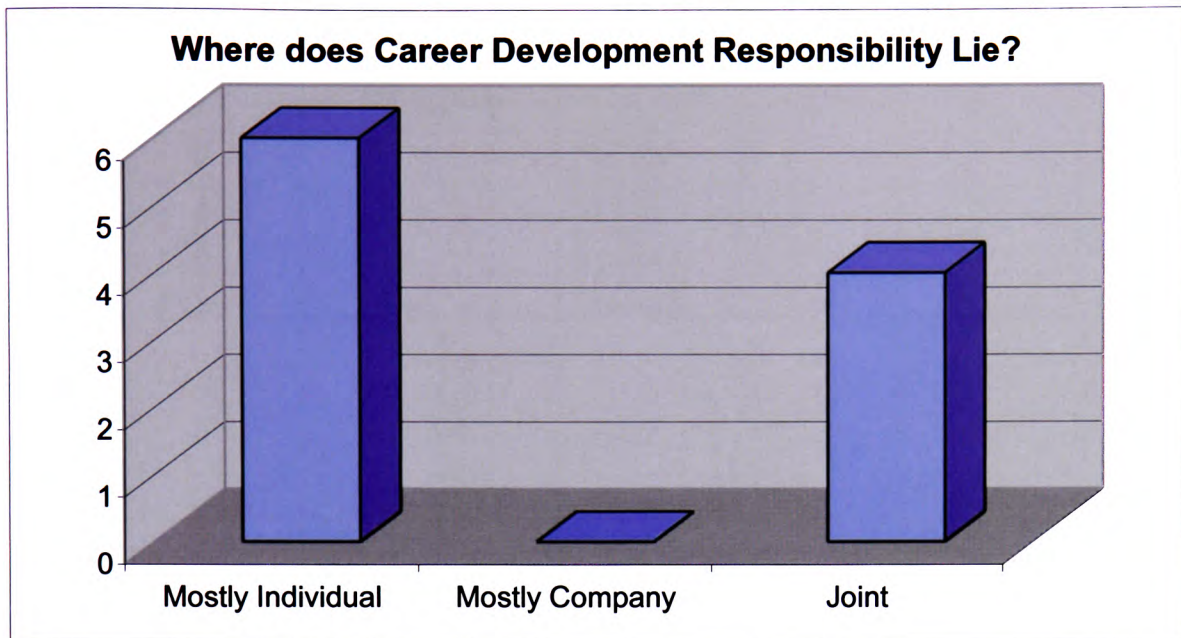


Fig: 12

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| 1.1.1 | Large global co., forward thinking, technology driven | I knew of IR as a discrete component supplier | Also considered that IR is a global US owned firm although smaller than other co's I've worked for. | knew they were a developing company that were expanding, mainly word of mouth that they were ok from someone who I did apprenticeship with | asked people already here if my skills would fit. Opportunity for development far greater than in an established company. | my initial thoughts were that they would be similar to TRW where I was working. | International company, secure employment | well-known company, big, I knew of them from buying components. | admired them, their marketing and innovation within the semiconductor market is very good. |
| 1.1.2 | Look after their employees, forward thinking HR/Recruitment policy. | Impression was of an extremely professional and well-organised company. | did some research and the package offered was very good, benefits like health cover and stuff. | Good employer, plant is like a small family, everyone mostly good in way they treat people. | | | main reason for wanting to join was career progression. | A good employer in fairness, the benefits/package is pretty good for the area. | some people I knew had gone to work for IR and they seemed to like it. |
| 1.2.1 | Small Team means more responsibility, co. is more flexible and agile to change and react. | like it as a company to work for, the terms and conditions and atmosphere is very good. | Good employer, plant is like a small family, everyone knows everyone. MD & HR Mgr are accessible. | | | Good. | Rewards are good here | | |
| 1.2.2 | I've had 4 or 5 different job titles all part of my career progression. | | | | | | | | |
| 1.2.3 | Dysfunctional depts., no cooperation, no clearly defined roles and responsibilities | not as well organised as I first thought, it's dis-organised. | | decisions made off the cuff, not planned, reactive then no-one plans in advance. Co focuses on the wrong areas | | | | | most badly managed company I've ever worked for. In capable of planning ahead, very disorganised. |
| 2.1.1 | Ultimate aim being to Team Lead within a couple of years. | goal was to get engineer status. | | my aim was to work my way up to being an Engineer. | to be accepted, deemed competent and not to be a Technician for the rest of my life. | I always wanted to be an engineer, get engineer status. | | | |
| 2.1.2 | | I would be happy to take on more responsibility again. | | | | I wanted to be a dept. manager of process engineering. | | | |
| 2.1.3 | I wanted to increase my experience, general understanding gain more responsibility and knowledge. | | to develop my software skills, a job is a means of developing my portfolio of skills. | | | | in order to get on as an engineer you needed to be on a days position. People on days always seem to know more about what is going on. | | |
| 2.2.1 | My experience has increased, my contacts, people I work with has also increased, level of knowledge has also increased. | Definitely learnt more in 6 years than anywhere else I've worked. | Yes I have already been able to develop my software skills. | | | My role move was decided for me, it was better for me in the long run to broaden my knowledge. | Yes I've learnt a lot more in 3 1/2 years here than I did in the 7 years at my previous employer. | | |
| 2.2.2 | | I'm now an Engineer | | Yes I came in as a Technician and now I'm an Engineer. | Yes I started as a Technician, then promoted to tech coordinator and then onto Engineer. | | | | |
| 2.2.3 | my career as a whole has probably gone backwards | No, I can't say it has, pretty much in the same role now as when I started. | | Yes & No. I know within myself, but not what IR wants from me, no procedures to show how you can progress | I feel I'm lower in my career than I should be. I did get promoted but I feel I failed. | | | | it hasn't progressed at all, I'm still in the same job, I know more about IR products that's all. |
| 2.3.1 | | | No I don't. There is no direct career path here, no structure. | | I guess I have to say no. I can fulfil my aspirations with the work I'm doing now. | not really, because only had 4 appraisals and 13 different bosses. | No there I haven't got any clear goals, leadership means its difficult to stay on track, no clear guidelines for development. | | |
| 2.3.2 | No not really, so many changes of boss each one has had their own idea of what they want. | No truthfully. No clear progression path here. | | | | Yes I need to dust off my CV and decide what I want to do. | | | Yes I do, my intentions are outside of the company, it involved retraining, learning new skills. |
| 2.3.3 | | | | | | | | | |

Discussion & Analysis

The first area of research to be conducted was to assess the IR Swansea Management Team's view of the organisation's capability to support a career development environment. This was achieved by using the NICEC research/CIPD evaluation checklist tool (2004) identified in the literature review. The checklist covered four areas that are seen as key to the organisation's career activities. The four areas were Strategy & Climate, Processes, People to talk to & Training in Career Support. The results show that the management team at IR as a whole seem to feel that the overall Strategy of the company towards career development needs some attention, with the majority answering the questions to this effect. This response lends some support the CIPD (2003) '*managing employee careers*' survey that found under half of the organisations they surveyed had a formal written strategy. One question within this section that was answered particularly poorly was question 4, relating to employee surveys, the management team obviously feel that career development is not an area that is covered in the employee satisfaction surveys used by the corporation, however the Tri-Ad survey (2004) does show questions regarding promotion of internal candidates and asks employees if they would stay at IR even if a comparable job was available in another organisation, perhaps their perception is that the survey should go further in to detail.

When analysing the Processes that support career development in the organisation there was a more varied response from the management team. The checklist queries whether the organisation has a clear and realistic view on the discussion of career development in appraisals or development reviews. This was answered almost equally across all three of the options with only a slight majority selecting the 'some attention needed' category. This would suggest that this is therefore an area where improvements could be made with regard to the appraisal process and the consistency of its application to the workforce. This mixed view could also be potentially down the short length of service of some members of the management. A split between the two opposing answers of some attention needed and pretty good, this is a good sign that perhaps the business seems to be able to offer the opportunity to discuss employee careers, so it maybe that just a little formalisation of the process is required there.

Question 8 suggested a lack of special development schemes at IRWA, with the majority of responses falling into the lower two categories, this again is supported by CIPD (2003) *Managing Employee Careers Survey* that also showed that less than a third of companies offered special development schemes for those requiring assistance or traditionally disadvantaged employees. There appears to be a dislocation in the belief within organisations that special attention is needed in the career management of certain groups of workers and the response of the CIPD survey that showed less than a third of organisations actually offer this support and attention.

The IR management team were more positive, when focusing on 'people to talk to'; the answer on the whole was 'pretty good'. The management team again seem to be suggesting that one to one dialogues between employees and line managers are good. Question 12 in particular had a unanimous response of 'pretty good' showing the management team has a perception that employees also have good interpersonal relationships with each other, thus offering another avenue for employees to discuss their career issues without their bosses being cross. The interesting thing will be to see if the management's perception of this area is correlated with the perception of the sample of indirect workforce also surveyed. In this otherwise positive section the opportunity for improvement lies in the clear communication of the role of the line manager in career development. The responses here convey that the situation is currently un-clear.

The final section questions the training in career support that the organisation gives to its leaders or people with career development responsibilities. This again was an area that did not fair well in the assessment of the management team, and shows itself as an area that requires focus, particularly the training of managers in how to support the career development of others. The outcome of this was somewhat predictable given the subject of this report. However, the CIPD Managing Careers Survey (2003) shows that IR is not alone in this lack of specialist training for line managers, as the research there showed a direct correlation between those organisations who train their line managers and the perceived effectiveness of career management programmes, as well as the degree of seriousness in which career management is regarded by the managers themselves.

The next step in the research of this report evolved from the analysis of the views of the management team. It was concluded that the perceptions of the management team provided an interesting place to start, being that these people were the main strategic decision makers of the business and the very individuals that would need to 'buy-in' to any possible recommended outcomes of the report. The data itself needed a comparator. After all, the employee's perceptions of the organisations ability to deal with their career development would give the most relevant data to the study. This would enlighten the study as to the potential improvements to be made either by formalising a career development strategy or conversely show that there wasn't a need for extra focus and that the employees view the organisations current working practices as sufficient. The Twenty indirect employees selected randomly from across the different functional departments, were then asked to complete the same NICEC questionnaire as the management team. On collating the employee's responses to the four checklists some interesting differences of opinion were discovered.

Strategy & Climate

The employees were more positive about the strategy and climate of the organisation's approach towards career development. The employees' answers showed almost 50% saw the company's strategy as 'good'. This is in comparison to the management teams' answer that did not use the good response at all. This could be because the employees have a different understanding of the question, or that the management team have a different concept of what is seen as employees developing their careers i.e. the employees are thinking at a more basic level in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs than the management. The next noticeable difference in outcome, again with the employee's being far more positive, again over 50% of the employees answered 'good' when questioned on the content of the employee attitude surveys. The difference could suggest that the managers have not seen or taken note of employee attitude surveys, possibly because they have not been surveyed directly themselves.

Process

When analysing the employee responses to the Process checklist the results between them and the management team are the most similar of all. For the employees opportunities to discuss their careers question; the employees answers showed a more negative view than that of the management, with only 37.5% of recipients answering 'good' in comparison with 42% of management. This suggests that there is a dislocation between the employee's perception of management's approachability and interest in discussing careers to that of the management team. This area of approachability is looked at more closely in the next checklist 'People to talk to'. However, for this section the most noticeable difference was that the management team have a much more negative view of special development schemes than the employees, 32.75% more of employees rated the schemes as 'good' than the management team, again this could be explained by differing perceptions of what 'special development schemes' are as this phrase isn't familiar to the sample surveyed, however, one likely reason for this dislocation is the majority of the management have less than one years service with the company and therefore have not encountered the graduate schemes of the past for example. The employees may also classify the various competency based training schemes used with the shop-floor workers as special development schemes.

People to Talk to

The checklist answered most favourably by the management team was also the most favourably answered section for the employees. This time the trend of the previous checklists where the employees responses have been more positive, has reversed, in this section the employees are noticeably more negative than the management team. This again shows the difference in views between the two groups, neither group seems to be too sure of the answer to whether or not the role of the line manager is a clear and realistic one, so this appears to be an area for the company to focus on making improvements. Question 10 asked whether or not employees have senior managers to talk to, in order to gain career advice, 83.3% of the management gave the top answer, compared to only 56.25% of employees. As this question is directly concerning the perceptions of Senior management and their

approachability it is to be expected that the IR management team would view themselves favourably, what is more interesting and provides a challenge for the organisation is the degree of difference in opinion; 27% between the management and the indirect employees. As mentioned previously this may be seen as supporting the CIPD (2003) Managing Careers survey findings in which organisations showed that in many cases line managers don't take career management seriously, this suggests that IR's employees may also feel this to be the case in Swansea.

The checklist asks if staff can approach others at work to talk about career issues without their boss getting cross, this was answered 100% positively by the management team, yet the employees were not so sure, only 68.75% of employees sharing that opinion. Again, an apparent void between the managements' perception of themselves; against the view of the employees. This response could support the Guest & Conway (2004) argument that employees still have issues in the areas of trust and fairness within the psychological contract. The section tackling whether or not it is felt that the employees know they can talk to someone specifically in HR or training about their careers, the employees view the accessibility of the Human Resources department more positively than the management team. This is a positive response and shows that the HR department are perceived to be available for career discussions with the wider employee population, this suggests the department may need to focus on the visibility of their employee relationships to the senior management team.

Training in Career Support

The employee's answered in response to whether managers receive training in how to support the career development of others slightly negatively. This section as a whole was answered with the majority of 'Attention Needed' and 'Really need to tackle this' answers, so this appears to be an area for the company to focus on and to try to improve. The most noticeable contrast in answers, was with the management teams view of whether the individuals who take a special role in career development such as mentors and HR professionals have more advanced training in how to conduct an effective career discussion, here none of the participants answered with 'good'. Whereas in contrast to the management 43.75% of

employees do appear to think that the HR staff do have more advanced training in how to conduct career discussions by answering this with the 'good' response. The NICEC (2005) research also found that many of the effective career development reviews were conducted by HR or were part of HR related career and training events, although the majority were not part of any formal HR process.

NICEC Questionnaire Overall Findings – Objective Two

When viewing the two questionnaire exercises at a top level as the CIPD/NICEC tool (2005) suggests the main areas for focus seem to be strategic and enabling individuals and supporters to feel confident in their ability to carry out effective career discussions, whilst having the opportunity to practise their skills. This supports one of the key themes from the CIPD Managing Employee Careers (2003) survey, that in order to make career management work there needs to be a clearly defined, written strategy that has the full commitment of the Senior Management team. The training of line managers is also essential to ensure that they take career management seriously and to be effective.

The positive aspect of the IR findings is that the company has no shortage of people it would seem that employees feel they are able to talk to. The role of available specialists such as the HR and Training practitioners seems to be well received and staff are perceived as available. The Senior Managers appear to just need some recalibration; this could be achieved by perhaps showing them the results of the employee questionnaires and the difference in perception of their approachability to discuss career development. The recent implementation of 360 degree feedback appraisals may help in raising the managements understanding of the employees views.

The Process area of the checklist is perhaps best evaluated as 'could do better' it is by far not the worst performing of the checklists, however the answers appear to be mainly split between 'good' and 'some attention needed', with a smaller number of participants answering the section with 'really need to tackle this' answers. It would follow that if the IR

strategy and approach toward career development were clear and firm, then perhaps the processes in place to support the strategy would be clearer and more relevant.

Second Stage Research – Interviewing the Key Knowledge workers of the business, the Engineers

Once the initial ‘temperature check’ to discover the perceived career development capability of the business, in the eyes of the decision makers (the Senior Management Team) and a sample of the professional and technical staff was concluded. The next phase of the research was to focus in on an area that was felt needed to be treated as a priority, the area was that of the key knowledge workers within the business; the Engineers.

The researcher wanted to probe deeper into the Engineers experiences by interviewing them in one to one interviews. This would enable the researcher to hopefully identify common themes and shared experiences; to understand the negative and positive aspects of the organisation as it currently stands. With the end result to hopefully discover in more detail areas for improvements and provide an idea of the type of career discussions and planning that might suit such workers.

The main results of the interviews can be viewed in the thematic framework in the previous Findings section. Initially the responses to the career discussion questions were compared against the findings of the NICEC (2005) research that gave the basis of the capability assessment tool that was used earlier. In terms of the career discussions the sample of Engineers had ‘received’ in their careers to date the majority of the IR answers contradicted the responses gained by the NICEC.

In the NICEC research the majority of positive career discussions took place with ‘Other Managers’ 30% in fact, where as the IR Engineers stated that the majority of career discussions they had received in their experience were within an appraisal, target-setting situation. One or two of the sample did mention discussions with a Mentor or with a specialist advisor; the NICEC research found that only a fifth of the positive discussions were

with the individuals line managers. It would appear that the sample of Engineers in this research have not had the diverse sources of support that the NICEC researchers found. There could be any one of a number of possible reasons why the Engineers in IR have had such limited experience, it could be down to the geographical and cultural identity of Wales, Wales still carries out much of its business in a traditional way, appraisals and approaches to career development would not be any exception. Another possible reason for this difference could be in the sector of employment and skill area of the Engineers sampled, the NICEC research has not focused on any one particular employment type, it may therefore be the case that in Engineering situations; due to the complex and technical nature of the employees it is often viewed as only the Line Manager that is capable of providing career development advice. This is an area that will be discussed later in the report, as the Engineers were asked what qualities they would expect of someone giving them career advice.

The NICEC (2005) research also asked where the positive career discussions took place, their settings. The NICEC research found the majority (80%) of effective career discussions took place by appointment, even the 59% that were not part of any formal HR process. Interestingly only 7% of discussions took place as part of a performance appraisal this contradicts the findings of this research at IRWA, where almost all were part of performance appraisal discussions. This raises the question why HR departments spend time devising strategies that use formal reviews, or even career development reviews, when the majority of effective reviews are as informal meetings (29%) or informal and unplanned (21%). The NICEC research appears also to contradict King (2004) who also states formal appraisals and reviews with line managers are key in providing feedback.

The engineers were also asked in line with the NICEC research what the impact of their career discussions were on them. The common answers from the IR Engineers were mainly concerning the benefits of having another person's point of view, giving a reality check on the individuals performance, and insight in strengths and weaknesses that allow the individual to focus on areas for improvement. In the NICEC research the largest impact was stated as being a clearer future career direction, this is not something specifically mentioned

by the IR sample. The second highest response from the NICEC research however does seem to fit with the majority of the IR responses in terms of Self-Insight.

Other responses from the IR engineers that would fit with those the NICEC discovered are 'on-going dialogue' and 'career skills' these two impacts were much lower on the NICEC list of impacts with responses of 25% and 20% respectively.

Key qualities of 'Givers'

An area within the IR interviews that imitated the NICEC research was in the area of identifying what the IR sample viewed as being the ideal qualities of an effective 'giver' of career advice. The key findings of the NICEC research were that 'effective givers' had interest in the individual and a commitment to helping. They should be honest, impartial and trustworthy; the research concluded that it was just as important to be honest as to possess specific helping skills.

In the IR sample the key qualities of 'effective givers' were believed to be someone with experience and largely in the same profession (engineering) as those interviewed. The 'giver' should have also progressed their career in a similar way to that of the individuals receiving, thus setting an example for those receiving the guidance and advice. One quality mentioned by more than one interviewee was that the 'giver' of advice should be able to affect the individual 'receiver's' situation. The qualities the IR Engineers described that supported the NICEC (2005) research, were understanding of the individuals career type, and the ability to empathise was also mentioned frequently. These qualities although not mentioned specifically in the previous research, appears to correspond to the findings that negative career discussions were based around the principle 'that 'givers' lacked interest and commitment to the individual; did not attempt to understand their concerns;'.

Perceptions of IRWA (Objective Three)

One section of the structured interviews that has so far not been discussed focused mainly on company specific experiential questions regarding the Engineer's views of International

Rectifier. The questions focused around the Engineer's perceptions of the company as an employer before they began their employment, and to offer a comparison how they view the company now after their current length of service. The view of the company prior to employment seemed to fit into two common themes, one was the view of IR as a large, U.S owned semiconductor company (theme ref:1.1.1); the other as an good employer that was expanding and growing in South Wales where many other companies were not (theme 1.1.2), the main interest being created by the idea that those who 'got in early would have the most opportunity progress' (Engineer B). The employees perception of IR prior to commencement was as would be expected a positive one, an expectation and belief that progression and development would be part of the benefit in working for such an organisation. This would be the beginning of the psychological contract with IR, and the 'promise' of career development may be seen as a commitment by IR to the employees.

Once the sample became employees of IRWA the views did become a little more varied, and were therefore classified into three common themes, the answers were largely positive although as perhaps to be expected there were some negative views. The positive themes fell into those who focused on the Good Conditions of employment (theme 1.2.1) answers mainly commenting on the 'good terms and conditions and good atmosphere'(Ref C), 'Good employer, the plant is like a small family'(D), 'Good Employer, good way of treating people, friendly atmosphere' (E) as just three examples.

The second theme identified initially but not well supported by answers to this question came from those who judged the company by their own career progression (theme 1.2.2). Only one respondent commented on the career development and progression already received; 'The company has been good to me, I've had four or five different job titles, all part of my career progression (B). Out of the sample of 10 there were only four negative responses to this question, this is encouraging feedback for the company. The four negative responses did follow a common theme of dissatisfaction over the lack of organisation and planning within the company, the four negative responses came equally from individuals in both Test and Process Engineering departments, so no pattern of department or length of service was recognisable from the negative sample.

IRWA can take heart from the largely positive responses to both questions concerning the employee view of them as an employer. Those who began with positive expectations have in the majority of cases maintained that positive view, after working for the company from as little as 10 months to as many as seven years. The next duo of questions similarly posed for both pre and post employment concerned the individual's career goals. Career goals prior to employment were classified into three further themes, the first of which was the desire to progress to Engineer status (Theme 2.1.1). This was the goal of half of the sample, supporting quotes include 'to develop mainly, my aim was to work up to being an Engineer' (E) and 'I wanted to be an Engineer and get Engineer status' (H).

The second emergent theme for Career goals prior to employment was to increase to a more supervisory role; three out of the ten interviewees mentioned this. This therefore shows that the most common career goal was to move forwards in a traditionally hierarchical manner, either within the engineering field or by taking on supervisory responsibility. This supports King (2004) who argued that the majority of employees think of careers as an 'up-ward progression of jobs, increasing in pay, status and responsibility'. Interestingly only two of the sample mentioned the third theme of increasing knowledge and skills (2.1.3) this implies a non-hierarchical view of an individual's career. These individuals talked about increasing their overall knowledge and skills, one interviewee mentioned 'each job is a step forward if it gives you the opportunity to add to your portfolio of skills' (D). This is how King (2004) herself defines 'career' as a sequence of employment related positions, roles, activities and experiences, the IR research appears to suggest that employees are perhaps ready to see their careers in this more modern way, again this is potentially partly due to cultural and historical factors surrounding industry in Wales.

When then asked how they felt their careers had developed during their time at IR, the responses were more individual, however most were able to be classified into three themes. The first classification was 2.2.1 those who felt their skills and experience had increased, engineer's B & I both commented they had learnt more at IR than they had in all the years they had worked for their previous companies, whilst Engineer D commented on the fact that

he is already developing his skills by starting a qualification with the company's support. Others responded by evaluating their careers again in the more traditional hierarchical measure of career development by the promotions they had gained (2.2.2). Quotes such as 'I came in as a Technician and now I'm an Engineer' (E), and 'I started as a Technician, then became a Technical Coordinator and now I'm an Engineer' (F) support this theme. These findings would suggest that on the whole IR has kept its promises in terms of that early part of the psychological contract, in which the employees perceived a promised commitment to career progression and development.

There were some negative responses from those individuals who felt that their careers had not progressed at all since joining the company, these responses were in the minority with only three engineers out of ten stating their careers were no further forward in their eyes than upon commencement.

Following on from these questions aimed at providing the report with some IRWA related historical background, the interviews moved on to discuss more specifically career development planning within IR, asking the Engineer's if they understood what they needed to do in order to develop their careers forward. This would hopefully give an indication of the degree of work to be done on developing a structure for career development.

The responses to this question were mixed, Yes, No and a combination of Yes & No depending on circumstances. Those who answered 'no' took the majority this time with six out of ten responding negatively to understanding how to develop their careers. There were two engineers who stated mixed answers, one stated that he knew what he wanted but not what the company expected, the other stated that problem of having different managers with different views on his career development as the reason for his confusion. A further two Engineer's answered that they knew what they needed to do but it did not involve the IR organisation.

The answers to this question seem to support the reason behind this research that IR needs to formalise it's career development plans in order that it's employees have a clearer view of how they can progress and indirectly stay with the organisation.

The next question in the interview was adopted from a question posed previously in research undertaken by Kaye Thorne in *Managing the Mavericks* (2003) in which she posed it to a sample of creative and innovative people. 'If you could change one aspect of organisations that would encourage the nurturing of talent, what would you recommend? The answers given by the IR sample that corresponded with those discovered by Thorne were, the need to provide regular feedback and communication, the IR engineers recommended the improvement of communication (3.1) either in one to one situations or even by more group discussions, Thorne also found that her interviewees suggested improvements to provide more regular, honest feedback. The IR sample also mention the need to improve the organisations ability to plan (3.2), this is echoed by the Thorne and Woodhouse (2003) results where the respondents suggested the organisation needed to keep a continuing sense of what is needed to develop for tomorrow as well as deliver today – develop long and short-term strategies. In the Thorne and Woodhouse (2004) training the managers interviewed suggested 'proper training programmes – not ad hoc, fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants, poorly funded, poorly planned, half-hearted training. The IR sample also cited training (theme 3.4) as an area where the nurturing of talent could be encouraged, Engineer E answered 'a more structured training plan, not just reacting e.g. you need to do this so you'll have to get this training, not training as a reaction to reach a goal'.

The final part of the interview specifically looked at the individuals experiences of career development reviews from their past, asking what topics were discussed if they had such reviews and whether there were tangible outcomes. Only two out of the sample had never received a development review and therefore did not submit answers for analysis in this section. The remaining eight interviewees however, shared their experiences. Half of the Engineer's received their review on an annual basis often in the guise of an appraisal review. The topics discussed seem to follow three routes, 4.2.1 was where the review discussed career progression, e.g. Engineer B remarked 'my manager would explain his expectations, and would ask how I wanted to develop'. Another route taken in these discussions was that of discussing annual objectives and the skills needed to meet them (4.2.2), two of the Engineer's cited this as the main area for discussion in their experience, whilst the third route

of discussion was the opportunity for the Engineers to discuss problems with a mentor (4.2.3) an example of this type of discussion was given by Engineer A ‘we discussed any problems, we were able to use them as a sounding board and they acted like mentors’.

The Engineers were asked whether they received any tangible actions from the reviews; these results fell into two themes, 4.3.1 where objectives, tasks and projects were assigned, the second theme 4.3.2 was where training and development opportunities were the action items. Four Engineers responses were regarding the setting of annual objectives and targets, where as the other four mainly had training and development targets set, Engineer G’s development targets were identified by partaking in an assessment centre situation in which tasks were completed assessed and a gap analysis undertaken to identify the opportunities for improvement, this appeared as a one off answer that did not fit any particular theme, but gave an interesting insight into the various ways career development can be approached.

When questioned about the perceived impact upon themselves of going through a career development review process, the key phrases and terms used were along the lines of ‘allows you to focus on what needs to be achieved’, ‘made you aware of your weaknesses’ and ‘a reality check, that made you reflect’, out of the eight Engineers who had experience of ‘development-type’ reviews all were positive about their experiences in terms of the effect it had on them and their future careers. This would suggest that the Engineers in IR would probably welcome a more structured career development review process, due to the positive nature of their previous experiences.

In order to provide and insight into the thinking approach of the Engineering employees at IR, it was decided to incorporate a question that aimed to determine how view and plan their careers. The CIPD (2005) tool argued there are seven possible ‘thinking frameworks’ for how individuals can view their careers. The responses to this question are displayed graphically, the graph clearly shows that the Engineers working at IR have a bias towards ‘Work Life Balance’ as a main influencer in terms of how they view their career, i.e. when considering the development of their careers, the Engineers at IR would make their choices based on the amount of additional time required to be in work as opposed to being at home

with their friends and families. This priority of work-life balance supports the findings of the CIPD (2003) careers survey in which 90% of organisations think that work-life balance is high on their employee's agendas. The second most popular choice of thinking framework was 'Career Anchors' this is what Schein, (1990) describes as the individuals self perceived talents, motives and values, that guide, constrain, stabilise and integrate a person's career. The personal values that would not be given up if forced to make a choice. There were two further thinking frameworks that came joint third. These two frameworks were; 'Where you are now, where do you want to be' (Egan, 2001) and the 'kitbags' approach where individuals see their careers as a journey on which you decide what skills, knowledge to take with you and which to leave behind.

This gives a background of information that again may prove useful when determining the right approach to take in devising a framework for use in IR, it would appear sensible to perhaps use elements of all of the top three/four thinking frameworks with the aim of making the approach meaningful to the employees targeted.

The final question to be discussed, 'is the responsibility for developing a career the individuals' or the company's'. Six out of 10 Engineers stated that the individual had the greater responsibility to develop their own career, although many added the employer had to provide the opportunities. Four of the ten viewed it as more of a joint responsibility, a half and half approach where both parties were equally responsible for developing the individual's careers. The CIPD (2003) Managing employees careers survey results again support this finding as it too argued that the majority of organisations surveyed followed a 'partnership' model when managing employee's careers, with HR still having the main responsibility for driving the process. King (2004) also argued that for career management to be effective the responsibility should be shared between both parties, with collaboration being one of the her four underlying principles.

In summary to answer the third objective of this dissertation it appears the Engineers do feel IRWA offers some level of career development support, however the approach is not structured and therefore can appear more scattered in nature. The frustration for the

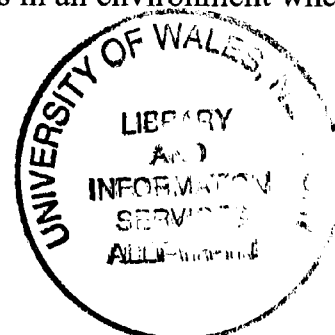
Engineers appears to be primarily around the lack of opportunity to discuss formally their careers with their managers. King (2004) perhaps sums up the concept of career management as a balance between the company's requirements and the individual's needs, with employers needing to aim for 'an optimal, rather than perfect, fit between the organisation 's and individuals' perspective'.

Conclusions

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the research within this report. The first of which perhaps is the most important, and fulfils the first objective of this report, the fact that the wider label of Talent Management covers many more specific areas, many of which have their own individual level of importance, especially when each organisation is unique, and all at different stages of their lifecycles, with varying business circumstances.

The theories stress the importance of the overall 'war for talent' in how organisations, attract, develop and retain their employees, this understanding allowed this research to evolve and eventually hone in on a specific area for investigation for the subject company International Rectifier, the area of developing and retaining talent. The company in lifecycle terms had managed to win the first battle in the 'War for Talent' by attracting and selecting the right staff with the best skill sets available for its business purpose, however, five to six years on it now needed to shift its focus and strategy onto the development and retention of those staff it recruited in the early years. These members of staff had grown in skills and experience and now needed more focus on the management of their careers to ensure they keep the skills, knowledge and experience gained within the company. Smith (2003) in his Aladdin's cave model argued it was about finding hidden treasure and releasing bottled-up genies.

Now the organisation is maturing, the ability to take a longer-term view should be becoming easier, profits are stabilising and manufacturing yields and outputs are virtually at target. Work needs to be done to ensure the longer-term viability of the organisation and its ability to plan effectively for the future is becoming more and more necessary. The theoretical research conducted earlier in this report has suggested that employee motivation plays a large part in Talent Management, and should attract specific attention in any strategy developed. The various theories identify what motivates people, suggest that one of the key areas for ensuring motivation is recognising an employee's value, and helping them to achieve fulfilment. Whilst in the Psychological contract it is stated that the employee expects a 'good employer' to help them manage and progress their careers in an environment where they can feel secure.



These employee views unfortunately go against the traditional view of many employers, as discovered by Hirsh in the CIPD report, where she found that most employers see a career development structure as a nice to have rather than an essential part of people management. This appears to be the case so far at International Rectifier, hence the fact that after nearly seven years no clear career development strategy exists.

The use of the CIPD tool for evaluating the perceived capability of IR currently as an organisation that provides career development gave a useful insight into the current situation, which achieves the second objective of this report, in terms of evaluating the current employee perception. The results seem to suggest a 'cup is half empty' view from the management team, whereas the employees perhaps have more of a 'half full' perception of the capability of the organisation. The management view was dislocated from the employees in many of the areas surveyed. Their views were significantly different on those questions that concerned their own approachability and role in career development, than the employees who were more negative. A conclusion that can be drawn here is perhaps a need for 'educating' the management team in the way the employees appear to think, to give the managers an insight into the employees expectations as in some cases their actual expectations will differ considerably from those the management would expect to see. This report itself is one way of communicating those differences of opinion and perception.

A more formal approach to career development would clarify the role of the managers, and give them more explicit responsibilities, as there appears to be a degree of uncertainty currently. Much of this however, could be as a result of the previously cited newness of many of the current management team members, as three out of the seven members of the management team have not yet gone through the annual appraisal process. This would give them more insight into the current practices of the organisation. The results would also suggest that a greater emphasis on career development would improve the perception of company processes, if there were more discussions and opportunities to discuss career development taking place within other HR processes or informal meetings.

When studying the results of the two IR samples responses to the NICEC questionnaire the one area that stands out more than any other is the positive response to the area that focuses on 'People to talk to'. A conclusion can therefore be made that this is a particularly strong area for IR and one that can perhaps provide a foundation for the company to build its strategy around and improve upon. The HR department appears to have a positive image in the eyes of the employees and appears to be approachable for such career related discussions. The employee's relationships with each other also seem to provide a positive theme that runs throughout this research report, again suggesting that a sense of camaraderie exists, and employees feel able to discuss career issues with other employees. This is helpful as it enables the employees to gain a differing view from their colleagues and in some cases a cross functional view from people in other departments. It would seem beneficial for an individual to gain a rounded view when thinking about their careers, so discussions that take place with HR, their boss, their colleagues etc would provide a much more varied and more rounded view that would allow the employee to consider fully their options.

It appears clear from the research that International Rectifier does need to focus on the training of its 'givers' of career advice; this was an area that did not score particularly well. Perhaps this should be expected, considering an objective of this report was to discover and analyse if there was a need for IR to formalise a career development programme, therefore suggesting that until now the company has not provided much of its time and focus on this area of people management. There is a general presumption perhaps from the employees that the HR department are the main people who receive specialist training in delivering career advice as this area scored well. It overall appears clear to both management and employees that this is an area for improvement for the general management and supervisory staff.

The research moved on to look into the more specific sample of knowledge workers within the organisation the Engineering staff and the focus of the third objective of the report. The main conclusions to be drawn from this section of the research were based in two areas; the company relevant conclusions such as whether or not the Engineers felt the company had lived up to expectations and whether they felt their career goals had been achieved so far. To the more generic career development conclusions that give an understanding of what the

Engineers perceive works within career discussions, their past experiences of career development and establishing the way the Engineers think about their careers.

The majority of Engineers saw the company in a positive light, as a good company to work for, with good terms and conditions and a good working atmosphere likened to that of a family. Many had basic career goals around climbing the career ladder in the traditional way e.g. gaining Engineer status after joining at Technician grades. Several of them felt they had progressed and achieved their initial career goals, although some had more negative responses, seemingly the older Engineers who joined the company as Engineers, who are now feeling as if they had not really progressed their careers at all, this would be highlighted perhaps by the fact that IR has a very flat structure and hierarchy. The company does not use job titles as a means of illustrating seniority or service, therefore no positions of 'Senior' or 'Principal' Engineer exist. This maybe something the company wishes to think about, in terms of how it manages those individuals who are not able to perhaps progress in terms of title, but perhaps be able to offer them as one Engineer put it 'a way in which they can develop their skills portfolio' as an alternative to the traditional hierarchical view of career development. A degree of education may be necessary here to dispel the old hierarchical view of what development is, and brand it as something that can take many different forms i.e. development of skills, experiences, responsibilities such as project management, supervisory positions etc.

Moving on to the Engineers experiences of career development in their previous positions outside of IR, the response was again mixed, some more junior Engineers felt they had never had the opportunity to partake in a career development review. The majority did however, and felt their experiences had been positive, that reviews gave them the opportunity to see a different perspective, and to understand the areas for improvement within their skills and abilities. The main conclusion being that the opportunity to have a formal dialogue with your supervisor was the main advantage, a formal way to obtain constructive feedback so the individuals felt they knew where they were, what was expected of them and how they could develop. This is perhaps the area that IR misses most by not having a clear career

development programme, there is no formal opportunity other than the appraisal to discuss and individuals career progress and path for the future.

The Engineers made it clear that in terms of ‘who’ they would expect to have this dialogue with, it should be someone who has the understanding and empathy of their particular profession, they should be able to act as a role model in terms of how they have developed their own career. They should have experience and knowledge as well as an ability to be able to ‘affect’ the individual’s career. This would suggest in IRWA’s case it would be the Engineering Manager who perhaps would carry the main responsibility for carrying out such discussions and giving advice.

The Engineers were also asked to look at seven ‘thinking frameworks’ of how individual’s view their careers, and comment on which ones seem the most relevant to their own view. The majority answer was a career based on decisions that surrounded ‘Work/Life Balance’, a concept becoming more popular in today’s working population and perhaps more relevant to IR as a company with a relatively high proportion of employees between the ages of 25-35 whom would more than likely have young families. This conclusion supports King (2004) who argued that what people want from their careers depends on where they are in their personal and working lives. This is therefore a view that should be taken into consideration when devising any frameworks for use within IR. The second most popular framework was ‘career anchors’, again potentially based on anchors that revolve around family commitments. The top four frameworks it could be concluded would be the most relevant to incorporate into any career development programme that IR may develop, as the skills ‘kitbag’ approach and the ‘where are you now, where do you want to be’ methods of thinking were joint third highest in responses from the Engineer sample. These preferred ways of thinking go toward satisfying the fourth objective of this research, in assisting the development of a framework that would be applicable to IRWA.

When evaluating the overall research undertaken for this report, it can be concluded that the research was successful in satisfying the four main objectives identified at the beginning of the study. The statement to be tested at the outset of ‘IR does not currently support the career

development of its Engineers, and this lack of a career development strategy concerns and frustrates it employees' seems to have been born out by the views and opinions gained during the research project. The Engineers did seem to be unclear of their career paths, some did express disappointment and frustration at not furthering their careers at IR, and some did mention that they now felt their future career opportunities were outside of the company. However, the research also identified some positive results in terms of the overall perception of the company's ability to support employees' career development was fairly positive, the company has strengths in its employees and their abilities to converse with one another and offer support to each other. The HR department is seen as approachable and is perceived to be skilled enough to offer career advice and support.

In the knowledge worker sample a good number of those sampled did feel that they had progressed their careers and learnt more in their time at IRWA than in any of their other employments. The variety of responses gained from the Engineers appears to suggest that the interviewees were comfortable with the style of the interviewer, and felt able to give both positive and negative feedback. The interview transcripts were passed back to the interviewees for checking and validation so it is therefore hoped that these transcripts do provide a true and fair record of the conversation that took place. It must of course be recognised that the individual conducting the interviews may have had some influence on the comments made by the interviewees, as purely by explaining the reason behind the interview 'wanting to ask some questions in regard to their view of the company, and their career development within it' would have potentially suggested a course for the interview to take, even if the interviewer was conscious not to prompt or to steer the interview in case of bias or suggestion.

Recommendations

It is the recommendation of this report that International Rectifier should first conduct an educational session for the management team to illustrate the business case for a specific career development strategy. The team need to see the advantage of 'growing your own' talent, however this does require more extensive planning for the future. The idea of succession planning and predicting the potential skills gaps of the future becomes key to the success of a career development strategy as the two go hand in hand. If the management team don't know the direction the organisation is going to take in the future, how can it accurately predict the skills needs and thus development opportunities of the future. The management team needs to support any new initiative 100%, as without visible management buy-in and support the message conveyed to employees will be one of mixed commitment or at worst apathy. CIPD (2003) Managing employees careers stresses the importance of a commitment from Senior Management as crucial to the success of any career management approach.

IR will then need to consider the scope of the policy to be implemented. The policy needs to be consistently implemented across all the functional departments, to avoid any 'us and them' situations, where some managers whole-heartedly enter into the spirit of career development whilst others pay more of a 'lip service' approach. It is clear from research by Goleman (1999) and Thorne (2003) and the research conducted for this dissertation that employees do feel more positively toward an employer that invests time to talk about their careers, whom supports them in managing their own career development, and yet provides the opportunities in which the individuals can grow in both experience and knowledge.

The need to refine and insist upon the completion of the annual appraisal is clear, as comments were passed by the Engineer sample that in the past appraisals had not been conducted or followed up properly. The annual appraisal is a key part of the overall career management process for the individual employee, as it provides them with essential feedback on how they are performing, whether there are any areas for improvement or gaps in skills that could be filled by additional training. The management team need to make a decision as to whether the idea of a career development review is something that should be part of an

annual appraisal process or a completely separate discussion that perhaps takes place once the appraisal exercise has been completed. For the purposes of this report and given the feedback from the Engineer's in IR about their previous experiences it would seem there is an expectation that this sort of formal discussion should take place as part of the annual appraisal review process. The insistence of conducting annual appraisals would also help to improve the 'tracking of employees', Woodhouse and Thorne, (2003) put forward the idea that organisations have a problem tracking people, with talent going unnoticed. This was also something mentioned by one of the Engineering sample that poor performance is focused on, yet talented performers are left with no focus or recognition.

A further recommendation would be to devise an element of the company's strategy around informal ways of discussing career development (Hirsh et al, 2004), for instance within departments managers one to one meetings with their employees, or simply to encourage those individuals identified as potential 'givers' to be available and to actively encourage employees to chat to them whenever necessary, an open door policy perhaps to career discussions. The HR department can also have a part to play in order to build on their already promising perceptions of approachability and specialist training, they to can more actively seek out employees views and offer advice and counselling if requested by employees on possible career directions and support available. The idea of career development by other means, not just hierarchical needs to be explored and included within the company's strategy. The company's flat structure means an hierarchical approach to career development is itself limiting, if as Arnold, (1997) suggests more lateral moves were available as a means of career development this would provide more opportunity for employees. The changing nature of careers and of IRWA's business would suggest this more project based or development assignment approach to development would work and add value to the business as well as value to the employees and their skill base. Cross-functional moves are also something that could be explored, and again would fit quite well within the existing functional organisational structure at the Swansea site.

To summarise; the recommendations for IRWA from the research conducted in this report are:-

1. Embark on a Management Education exercise as to the business case for implementing a 'Talent Management' approach to Career Development within the Swansea site, in order to develop and retain the key knowledge workers, and support staff.
2. Develop a greater level of emphasis and importance for the annual appraisal process, this is an important opportunity for formal dialogue and feedback that the employees themselves want and would welcome.
3. By carrying out the annual appraisal, this gives the management an opportunity to discuss the career development possibilities for each individual, and devise an action plan of areas for improvement or developmental assignments that may help the employees to grow and develop into an even more valuable resource for the company.
4. The company HR department should devise a method of training for the givers of career advice and ensure 'givers' roles and responsibilities are clear within the overall development strategy.
5. The development discussions should take into consideration the variety of thinking frameworks that appear suitable and relevant to the IR staff, and pay particular attention to the importance of a 'work/life balance' to a large number of its employees.
6. To continue to seek feedback from employees by means of satisfaction surveys in order to measure the impact of implementing such a strategy, by using the benchmark data collated in this report as data to use for future comparisons.

Potential Implementation Issues

1. The initial issue is to ensure the Senior Management team see the issue of Talent Management as a key issue, to ensure that developing the existing talent is seen as a key driver towards the business achieving its long-term aims and customer requirements.

The management team at the site also have to contend with an impending sale of the business and the potential change in direction provided by the new owner, this could

of course also mean a potential change in management personnel, which would again potentially affect any implementation programme.

2. The annual appraisal process needs commitment from the Management Team, and the success of this process is also down to the ability to monitor and follow up on the review. Training will be provided to further educated people managers on how to carry out their appraisals effectively.
3. The potential issue that may arise through incorporating a career development element into the appraisal process is the issue of not having the ability or resource to develop everyone in the way they would like. The resources and spend of the company does have limits so there will be a need for an element of prioritising in terms of the business capability requirements. This could pose a risk of those individuals who perhaps do not feel they are being developed in the particular direction they wish losing their motivation.
4. Resources issue, would need time from Training Officer for design and delivery of course internally as well as the input of the HR Manager in order to align the training with the overall strategy and approach.
5. Realisation that discussion approach cannot suit everyone 100% however elements of the main thinking frameworks identified within the IR research would be advisable.
6. Employee Survey cost implication if an external provider is to be used to conduct and analyse survey data, if not an internal approach would be a drain on limited HR resource and would potentially diminish the responses of the employees if IR managed the survey.

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Appendix 1

Interview Schedule

1. How long have you worked for International Rectifier?
2. How did you view IR as an employer prior to actually joining the company?
3. What were your career goals and expectations at the time of commencement?
4. How do you view IR as an employer now you have worked for them for the last ___ years/months?
5. Do you feel your career has progressed well during your employment to date?
6. Do you feel you understand what you need to do in order to move to develop your career forward?
7. Do you perceive yourself as having a long-term future at the Swansea site?
8. What do you think about this statement 'that in order to progress as an Engineer you have to take on a people management role or supervisory responsibility'?
9. Do you feel the management team here are interested in developing the existing talent of the organisation?
10. If you could change one aspect of the organisation that would encourage the nurturing of talent what would you recommend?
11. Have you received career counselling or development reviews in previous employments?

Who was the conversation with and where did it occur?

12. What did you talk about, were there tangible actions?
13. What was the overall impact on you of going through the process?
14. Which of these career development thinking frameworks would you find useful –
 - a. Where are you now, Where do you want to be – will you know when you arrive? (Egan, 2001)
 - b. Identifying your career anchors – your perceived talents/motives/values – things you would not give up if forced to make a choice (Schein, 1990)
 - c. Work Life Balance – more or less of your life in work in the future

- d. Kitbags – view as a journey, what you want to take/leave behind
- e. Force Fields – Positive/Negative influences on your career
- f. Timelines – work and life, review past/plan future.(Hopson and Scally, 1999)
- g. 5 & 10 year plans – what you want to achieve by when?

15. What qualities would you expect from someone giving you career advice?

16. Do you believe that individuals have a greater responsibility to develop their own careers than their employer?

Appendix 2

Example Interview transcripts.

Interview Schedule

1. How long have you worked for International Rectifier?
2 Years and 9 months.
2. How did you view IR as an employer prior to actually joining the company?
First contact was with IR in 1996 in my year out. Main knowledge of the company was in their discrete components, the power MOSFET's etc.
I was interviewed by IR Oxted then for a place on their graduate placement scheme (global rotation programme). I associated IR with new technology, power transistors, being at the forefront of technology.
What about the company as an employer?
Prior to my first interview with Oxted I viewed them as a large, global company who were forward thinking, technology driven who looked after their employees and developed impressive ideas. Post interview in '96 the view was reinforced if anything, the focus was then on energy saving designs, Alex by that time had his electric car which I thought was impressive, the companies focus was on energy saving, 'green' approach. I still thought they were forward thinking, even in their HR and Recruitment policy – at the time that was portrayed as being focused on bringing in people from outside who could bring in new skills and challenge the existing ways of working and thinking. It seemed a company that wanted to evolve, and therefore as an employee, a company in which you would not stagnate.
3. What were your career goals and expectations at the time of commencement?
My career goals.....at the time I wanted to increase my experience, increase my general understanding, gain more responsibility and improve my knowledge, the ultimate aim being to Team Lead within a couple of years. I wanted to head up the non-technical path into supervisory/leadership. I expected IR to be able to provide that path and structure. I expected there to be a clear training programme (*more of structure than a defined training program*) and resources to enable me to do this. I also expected there to be people in the business who would be examples of successfully developing their careers in this way. I also thought there would be clearly defined roles and responsibilities, a clear development path. I would expect there to still be a selection process to go through in order to gain the opportunity to progress, and you don't get anything unless you ask for it. Finally I also expected there to be equal opportunity for all in terms of the training and development available.
4. How do you view IR as an employer now you have worked for them for the last 2 years?
Which part of IR Swansea or Corporate?
Your view on both would be interesting as a comparison.
For Swansea, there is no clear career path, no open book on training policy, no clearly defined roles and responsibilities. There is no clear cooperation or synchronisation between functional groups. No Line Leaders or Production Managers seem to have any quality targets! The dysfunction from the fact that the departments don't work together spills out and causes problems elsewhere in the business, especially when new starters come in. This has happened a lot in the Engineering area.
There is no help for new starters to teach them the IR culture; there are no systems for explaining how to get things done here, the 'way IR works'. No one tells you where the data comes from, how you get data, it all seems to be on a 'need to know' basis. This means the induction process is failing, we rely on experience too much, that's the only way you learn in this company is by being here observing what goes on and

learning from that. This means if someone who has worked here a long time leaves no one will know what to do. No succession planning for knowledge, the system is lacking.

(IH gives an example of poor training and knowledge management with regard to the document management system.)

The good things about Swansea are that because it's a small team, you do get more responsibility; the company is more flexible and agile to change and react. However, that does also mean that poor performance is focused on more than good. Some good improvements are missed and not recognised because everyone is too busy focusing on poor performers. The company should recognise good performance and try to roll it out to other areas to learn from the experience and move all areas forward rather than just one. The company is probably missing out on money saving opportunities because of this way of working. The impact of yield is also not understood in manufacturing.

Globally (Corporate) I view the company as El Segundo, Mexico, Oxted, Newport & Krefeld that's where my knowledge of corporate comes from. There the company seems better organised, where roles and responsibilities are more clearly defined. Data and information is more widely available and shared, Training and Development also seems more available and obvious. There are people out there who are examples of how careers progress within the company. The design function is the only part of the business that seems remote but that's the case in a lot of companies with design functions.

Corporate is more focused on the customer, and it knows why it's working in the way it is and for whom. It has a clear link to the bottom line.

Swansea seems to screw the little things up; with inconsistencies in the way people are managed and rewarded. The policing of Managers doesn't happen consistently, you can be treated completely differently depending on which manager you work for. One department can see the MD as approachable, cooperative and helpful, whilst another can see him as threatening and unapproachable. Examples of these small things – mobile phones, overtime, computer allocation, Holidays, team meetings all dealt with differently depending on the department you're in.

5. Do you feel your career has progressed well during your employment to date?
My experience has increased, my contacts; people I've worked with have also increased. My level of knowledge has also increased, although I feel my career as a whole has probably gone backwards.
6. Do you feel you understand what you need to do in order to move to develop your career forward?

It changes to be honest, some days I do some days I don't. The fact I have had a lot of different managers hasn't helped. Some managers I felt like I knew what was expected other managers I didn't. The manager I have now is still new, so I'm not clear at the moment. We are all still in the early stages of him obtaining his knowledge by daily meetings and reviews but that's fair enough.

When I've been with the Senior IR guys, Vice President of Operations it has seemed clear what I would need to do to progress, by adding value, improving product quality and performance etc.

7. Do you perceive yourself as having a long-term future at the Swansea site?

A couple of years maybe 2-3.

8. What do you think about this statement ‘that in order to progress as an Engineer you have to take on a people management role or supervisory responsibility’?

I agree with it actually. I’ve not seen many people progress solely on their technical ability in manufacturing. I’ve seen it done in R&D environments, but not generally in manufacturing. Manufacturing is about people, so in order to progress you have to be able to manage them. The reason I say this is because in a previous organisation there were 4 guys in 100,000 who were world renowned and published articles etc that were able to develop by technical knowledge and ability alone, but it doesn’t happen very often.

9. Do you feel the management team here are interested in developing the existing talent of the organisation?

No, the most senior jobs that have been available since I joined have not been advertised internally, the only jobs to be given to internal people have been line leaders and tech leads. The signals I think that the organisation doesn’t believe anyone internally have the ability, so it sends the wrong message.

10. If you could change one aspect of the organisation that would encourage the nurturing of talent what would you recommend?

The company should encourage employees to develop their application of knowledge as a means of developing, rather than just sending people on courses to acquire knowledge in training courses never to apply to their work. The company needs to acknowledge that it’s not always training courses and qualifications that are needed sometimes its free thinkers who aren’t as conventional that can add the most value. People who will just keep asking Why? Why? Why? Not those people who are just taught to repeat what they have learned many times on a training course.

11. Have you received career counselling or development reviews in previous employments?

Yes, when I was a Graduate trainee at Zetec, initially a review was every month then it went to every 8 to 12 weeks.

Who was the conversation with and where did it occur?

A Senior Engineer conducted it, and we discussed any problems, we were able to use them as a sounding board and they acted like mentors.

In Nortel I got technical guidance from my boss and that helps move you forward, they would put you in for projects that would allow you to learn new things.

12. What did you talk about, were there tangible actions?

There were tangible actions sometimes. Sometimes it would be a piece of advice to get involved in a particular project that would expose me to a technology. A lot of the conversations were about seeing other peoples points of view, when I was younger I was more arrogant and I learnt a lot about how different people in different parts of the business view things, rather than seeing it just from my perspective.

13. What was the overall impact on you of going through the process?

It did help me move forward in my career, and mature. It helped me deal better with interpersonal relations within work, understanding other people’s points of view. I also learnt about different conditions in unionised environments from different people, a lot of knowledge was passed onto me about what is fair and unfair in working practice.

14. Which of these career development thinking frameworks would you find useful –

- A. Where are you now, Where do you want to be
- B. Identifying your career anchors – your perceived talents/motives/values – things you would not give up if forced to make a choice
- C. Work Life Balance – more or less of your life in work in the future
- D. Kitbags – view as a journey, what you want to take/leave behind
- E. Force Fields – Positive/Negative influences on your career
- F. Timelines – work and life, review past/plan future.

G. 5 & 10-year plans – what you want to achieve by when?

A/E – Partner/F

15. What qualities would you expect from someone giving you career advice?

They should be experienced, not necessarily in the same field as me. I would have thought the same age as me if not older. A third party not involved in engineering at all is also useful to give a completely different view on things.

16. Do you believe that individuals have a greater responsibility to develop their own careers than their employer?

Ultimately the individual does have more responsibility for their career than the company. However, the company needs to provide the opportunities, and the financial commitment to develop and train the individuals (if possible – not always).

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Your view on both would be interesting as a comparison.

For Swansea, there is no clear career path, no open book on training policy, no clearly defined roles and responsibilities. There is no clear cooperation or synchronisation between functional groups. No Line Leaders or Production Managers seem to have any quality targets! The dysfunction from the fact that the departments don't work together spills out and causes problems elsewhere in the business, especially when new starters come in. This has happened a lot in the Engineering area.

There is no help for new starters to teach them the IR culture; there are no systems for explaining how to get things done here, the 'way IR works'. No one tells you where the data comes from, how you get data, it all seems to be on a 'need to know' basis. This means the induction process is failing, we rely on experience too much, that's the only way you learn in this company is by being here observing what goes on and learning from that. This means if someone who has worked here a long time leaves no one will know what to do. No succession planning for knowledge, the system is lacking.

(IH gives an example of poor training and knowledge management with regard to the document management system.)

The good things about Swansea are that because it's a small team, you do get more responsibility; the company is more flexible and agile to change and react. However, that does also mean that poor performance is focused on more than good. Some good improvements are missed and not recognised because everyone is too busy focusing on poor performers. The company should recognise good performance and try to roll it out to other areas to learn from the experience and move all areas forward rather than just one. The company is probably missing out on money saving opportunities because of this way of working. The impact of yield is also not understood in manufacturing.

Globally (Corporate) I view the company as El Segundo, Mexico, Oxted, Newport & Krefeld that's where my knowledge of corporate comes from. There the company seems better organised, where roles and responsibilities are more clearly defined. Data and information is more widely available and shared, Training and Development also seems more available and obvious. There are people out there who are examples of how careers progress within the company. The design function is the only part of the business that seems remote but that's the case in a lot of companies with design functions.

Corporate is more focused on the customer, and it knows why it's working in the way it is and for whom. It has a clear link to the bottom line.

Swansea seems to screw the little things up; with inconsistencies in the way people are managed and rewarded. The policing of Managers doesn't happen consistently, you can be treated completely differently depending on which manager you work for. One department can see the MD as approachable, cooperative and helpful, whilst another can see him as threatening and unapproachable. Examples of these small things – mobile phones, overtime, computer allocation, Holidays, team meetings all dealt with differently depending on the department your in.

5. Do you feel your career has progressed well during your employment to date?

My experience has increased, my contacts; people I've worked with have also increased. My level of knowledge has also increased, although I feel my career as a whole has probably gone backwards.

6. Do you feel you understand what you need to do in order to move to develop your career forward?

It changes to be honest, some days I do some days I don't. The fact I have had a lot of different managers hasn't helped. Some managers I felt like I knew what was expected other managers I didn't. The manager I have now is still new, so I'm not clear at the moment. We are all still in the early stages of him obtaining his knowledge by daily meetings and reviews but that's fair enough.

When I've been with the Senior IR guys, Vice President of Operations it has seemed clear what I would need to do to progress, by adding value, improving product quality and performance etc.

7. Do you perceive yourself as having a long-term future at the Swansea site?

A couple of years maybe 2-3.

8. What do you think about this statement 'that in order to progress as an Engineer you have to take on a people management role or supervisory responsibility'?

I agree with it actually. I've not seen many people progress solely on their technical ability in manufacturing. I've seen it done in R&D environments, but not generally in manufacturing. Manufacturing is about people, so in order to progress you have to be able to manage them. The reason I say this is because in a previous organisation there were 4 guys in 100,000 who were world renowned and published articles etc that were able to develop by technical knowledge and ability alone, but it doesn't happen very often.

9. Do you feel the management team here are interested in developing the existing talent of the organisation?

No, the most senior jobs that have been available since I joined have not been advertised internally, the only jobs to be given to internal people have been line leaders and tech leads. The signals I think that the organisation doesn't believe anyone internally have the ability, so it sends the wrong message.

10. If you could change one aspect of the organisation that would encourage the nurturing of talent what would you recommend?

The company should encourage employees to develop their application of knowledge as a means of developing, rather than just sending people on courses to acquire knowledge in training courses never to apply to their work. The company needs to acknowledge that it's not always training courses and qualifications that are needed sometimes its free thinkers who aren't as conventional that can add the most value.

People who will just keep asking Why? Why? Why? Not those people who are just taught to repeat what they have learned many times on a training course.

11. Have you received career counselling or development reviews in previous employments?

Yes, when I was a Graduate trainee at Zetec, initially a review was every month then it went to every 8 to 12 weeks.

Who was the conversation with and where did it occur?

A Senior Engineer conducted it, and we discussed any problems, we were able to use them as a sounding board and they acted like mentors.

In Nortel I got technical guidance from my boss and that helps move you forward, they would put you in for projects that would allow you to learn new things.

12. What did you talk about, were there tangible actions?

There were tangible actions sometimes. Sometimes it would be a piece of advice to get involved in a particular project that would expose me to a technology. A lot of the conversations were about seeing other peoples points of view, when I was younger I was more arrogant and I learnt a lot about how different people in different parts of the business view things, rather than seeing it just from my perspective.

13. What was the overall impact on you of going through the process?

It did help me move forward in my career, and mature. It helped me deal better with interpersonal relations within work, understanding other people's points of view. I also learnt about different conditions in unionised environments from different people, a lot of knowledge was passed onto me about what is fair and unfair in working practice.

14. Which of these career development thinking frameworks would you find useful –

- a. Where are you now, Where do you want to be
- b. Identifying your career anchors – your perceived talents/motives/values – things you would not give up if forced to make a choice
- c. Work Life Balance – more or less of your life in work in the future
- d. Kitbags – view as a journey, what you want to take/leave behind
- e. Force Fields – Positive/Negative influences on your career
- f. Timelines – work and life, review past/plan future.
- g. 5 & 10-year plans – what you want to achieve by when?

A/E – Partner/F

15. What qualities would you expect from someone giving you career advice?

They should be experienced, not necessarily in the same field as me. I would have thought the same age as me if not older. A third party not involved in engineering at all is also useful to give a completely different view on things.

16. Do you believe that individuals have a greater responsibility to develop their own careers than their employer?

Ultimately the individual does have more responsibility for their career than the company. However, the company needs to provide the opportunities, and the financial commitment to develop and train the individuals (if possible – not always).

